ENCOUNTER

CURRENT AFFAIRS – LITERATURE – THE ARTS

NOVEMBER 1987

£1.50

Private Castle, Prison Camp

Vladimir Bukovsky and George Urban

The Power of "The Fourth Estate"

Jean-François Revel (Paris) **Herb Greer** (London)

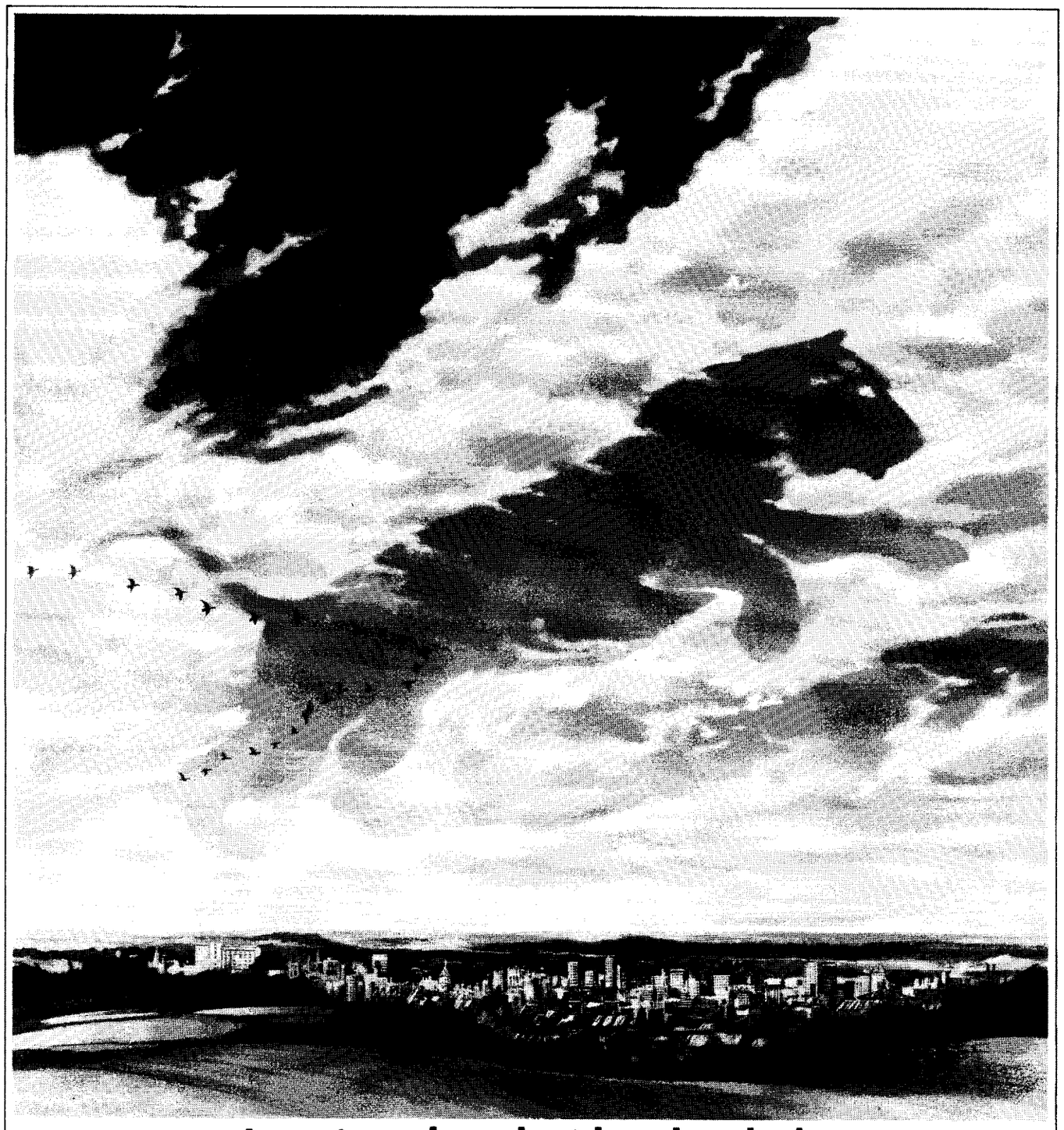
George Watson: The Conservative Contradiction

SPECIAL BOOK SECTION

Lynn Pan: China **Vernon Bogdanor:** Reagan & Nixon

Barbara Beck: Terrorists **Richard Mayne:** Hitler

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Leaping ahead with unleaded.

The UK and its EEC partners have agreed that unleaded petrol should be widely available to motorists by October 1989.

At Esso, we've already risen to meet the challenge.

In June 1986 we opened the first unleaded petrol pump in the UK. Now our network of service stations selling unleaded is the biggest in the country.

By the end of this year there will be over 200 Esso stations offering Esso Unleaded.

We're moving forward in what's clearly the right direction.

If you would like to know where to find Esso Unleaded in Britain, please call in at any Esso station and pick up the Esso Unleaded leaflet and Site Directory.

We hope you will find them helpful.

Esso

Quality at work for Britain.

A MEMBER OF THE EXXON GROUP

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORS
Melvin J. Lasky
and Richard Mayne

EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER
Anthony Robinson

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Bryan Healing

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS
Margot Walmsley
J. C. Hall

ADVERTISEMENT DIRECTOR
Antony Pullen

PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISING
Sarah Clifford-Jones

ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER
Janice Ward

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Jacqui Lewis

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Pat Savage

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT
Pat Shutler

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT
Shirley Lewis

ADVISORY BOARD
Maurice Cranston
D. J. Enright
Anthony Hartley
Leo Labedz
Edward Shils
Anthony Thwaite
George Urban
John Weightman

PUBLISHING ADVISERS
Lord Ardwick
Blouke Carus
Lord Cudlipp
Leon Levy
Julio Nunez
Julia Robinson
Jack Watmough
Gary Bogard (chairman)

COVER
David Costa

ENCOUNTER

NOVEMBER 1987 VOL. LXIX No. 4 ISSN 0013-7073

CONTENTS

Hope & Despair in the Soviet System — *Vladimir Bukovsky, George Urban* — 3
Green Winter (*story*) — *Matthew Francis* — 20
Column — *M* — 26

MEN & IDEAS

Kafka as the Insurance Man — *Ritchie Robertson* — 29

POEMS

Eva Salzmann 19, R. N. Allan 23, Vernon Scannell 24, Ian Caws 28, Selima Hill 62, A. H. Snow 66, Peter Norman 72

NOTES & TOPICS

"New Tech" & the Soul of Man — *O. L. Smaryl* — 33
Paris Notebook — *Jean-François Revel* — 37

SPECIAL BOOK SECTION: POLITICS & WORLD AFFAIRS

Follow My Leader — *Lynn Pan* — 44
Disproving Darwin? — *Vernon Bogdanor* — 50
Lord of Misrule — *Richard Mayne* — 56
Terrorism Unlimited — *Barbara Beck* — 59
Books Encountered — *R.M.* — 63

THEATRE

Modern Dress, Old Hat — *Edward Pearce* — 64

CONTROVERSY

The Conservative Contradiction — *George Watson* — 67

MEDIA

Embattled Images — *Herb Greer* — 73

BOXES

Freedom of Conscience (*Irina Ratushinskaya*) 6, Dissident Spectre (*International Herald Tribune*) 34, Left & Right (*Francis King*) 65

AUTHORS 77 — LETTERS 78 — LIFE & LETTERS 81

© 1987 by Encounter Ltd. Ten issues a year (July-August and September-October are single issues). Per copy: UK £1.50: USA $3.50. Back numbers £2.25 ($5.00). Postage/packaging: 50p ($1.00). Annual subscriptions: UK £18.00: USA & Canada $39.00 air-freight: India £20.00 by air. Elsewhere £19.00. Address for all departments: Encounter Ltd., 44 Great Windmill Street, London W1V 7PA (01-434 3063): UK Trade Distributors: Cutlerglen, 13 Newington Industrial Estate, Crampton Street, London SE17 3AZ (01-708 1308). Second-class postage paid at Rahway, NJ. US Postmaster: send address corrections to Encounter, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd Inc., 10B Engelhard Avenue, Avenel, NJ 07001. Manuscripts are returned only if accompanied by s.a.e. (English stamp) or International Reply Coupons.

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ANDEAN PROJECT

The Andean Project has as its object 'to relieve poverty and sickness, to advance education and to promote any other purpose which is charitable by English law, all for the benefit of the peoples of the Andes Mountains'.

The primary intention behind these objects is to increase the self-confidence of the indigenous Andean mountain groups facing a rapidly changing world and to promote self-help through health, agriculture and animal husbandry programmes, crafts and the development of marketing skills. By these means, cultures containing ideas of universal significance, which have survived virtually unchanged for several hundred years, may continue to provide a satisfactory basis for local life. This would help to reverse the flow of these mountain peoples who are at present drifting towards cities and ports, creating new foci of poverty, sickness, and unemployment.

With official support from Neighbourhood Councils, the municipalities of Calama, San Pedro de Atacama and Ollague, the Andean Project is in need of £25,000 to administer essential health programmes and a preliminary study of the province of El Loa in the Atacama Desert. This will identify local needs, highlighting areas where further initiatives could improve child and family health, irrigation and animal husbandry.

Please address enquiries and donations to The Secretary, The Andean Project, 101 Barkston Gardens, London SW5. Telephone 01-373 5273.

Reg. Charity No. 291879.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hope & Despair in the Soviet System

A Conversation between VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY *&* GEORGE URBAN

1. Bukovsky's Castle

URBAN: *A friend of mine with whom I once burnt the midnight oil puzzling over "the meaning of life" was in the habit of saying: "Everyone must have a* 'petit château' *in his imagination where he can find shelter from the hard knocks and banalities of the human condition." I recalled this phrase vividly when I first read your book "To Build a Castle", for the* "château" *you were constructing for yourself during your imprisonments in the Soviet Union was (or so it seems to me) precisely that kind of refuge—a haven of hope and sanity in a world of coercion and psychiatric abuse.*

BUKOVSKY: The way I came to think of the image of a castle takes me back to my childhood. I was a young teenager, thirteen or fourteen or so, when Khrushchev's impact began to be felt in the Soviet Union. Of course, at the time I did not understand half of what was going on around me; but what I did understand was that some momentous change was looming and that I did not like the world into which I had been born. I was a voracious reader but could not bring myself to read Soviet literature. It wasn't that I was consciously hostile to it. I just had an instinctive dislike of the stuff because I found it mean and drab. So I ploughed through the Russian classics and the non-Russian classics in translation; and in my Russian books—Chekhov, for example—I ran repeatedly into scenes that occurred in spacious country houses which gave the reader a feel of a rather gentle, thoughtful, reflective type of living, light-years away from Soviet reality.

I spent some of my childhood in one of the historic quarters of Moscow, the Arbat. My grandmother often took me for walks there, and it was in the Arbat that I first saw old, gracious mansions of the kind I was to encounter in the classics. In other words, by the time I came to read about the sort of life people lived in a traditional and cultivated milieu I was already attuned to it, by the merging of a child's instinctive aspiration to a more inspiring order of things with the mysterious beauty of the mansions in the Arbat.

—You were clearly not one of the success stories of ideological conditioning by the Soviet system. . . .

BUKOVSKY: No, I wasn't, even though I came from a fairly poor family, and was in reality nothing but a street urchin when these impressions began to register.

As time went on, I developed great love for those buildings in the Arbat and, looking back on my thinking as an adolescent, I suppose it would be true to say that those mansions represented a form of mental escape for me, although I wasn't aware of it at the time.

—Your genes seem to have been stronger than the impact of your environment.

BUKOVSKY: Much stronger. What is more, style seemed to me more important than substance. The architectural grace of

---

VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY, *after having served some ten years in Soviet prisons, labour camps, and "psychiatric" institutions, was exchanged for a Chilean Communist Party leader (in Zurich, 1976). He was educated at Moscow State University, and his efforts on behalf of Russian political prisoners and human rights brought him into conflict with the Soviet authorities. Dina Kaminskaya, the valiant Moscow lawyer who defended many dissidents in their court cases, has written an illuminating account of Bukovsky and the others in her book "Final Judgment" (1985); see Lev Kopelev's article "One Moscow Lawyer"* (ENCOUNTER, *September-October 1985). Since his departure from Russia, Bukovsky has carried out research work at the Department of Psychology at Stanford University and has written a number of books, among them his autobiographical memoir, "To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter" (André Deutsche, 1978), which has been translated into Swedish, Italian, Spanish, French, and German.*

GEORGE URBAN'S *contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include conversations with Alain Besançon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), Daniel Bell (February 1983), W. Averell Harriman (November 1981), Zbigniew Brzezinski (May 1981), Leszek Kolakowski (January 1981), and Milovan Djilas (December 1979).*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the buildings in the Arbat induced me to weave a whole world of values and ideas that began to sustain me spiritually.

—What you are saying is that Pol Pot and the Red Guards under Mao were, in their way, right. Your resistance to the system was greatly helped by the availability of the Russian classics and the survival of old buildings. Pol Pot took care to demolish all remnants of a "bourgeois" past, including books and buildings, and indeed even the spectacles through which to peer at them.

BUKOVSKY: From his point of view Pol Pot *was* right. Fortunately Stalinism was slightly less thorough, and the lip-service it had to pay to the Russian past made it impossible for the Stalinists to do a demolition job on the whole of Russian culture and history. They did it on selected parts, and at times best suited to their purpose.

—So the idea of a "castle" came naturally from your inclinations as a child and an adolescent?

BUKOVSKY: It developed from the skein of factors I have described. By the time I first went to prison, it was there.

—Perhaps it wasn't just a mental escape but a subconscious protest against your environment, against "proletarian culture" and "socialist realism"?

BUKOVSKY: Looking at it from today's perspective, I would say it was. Soviet reality is grey and ugly, and the artefacts of life are just tasteless and boring. I am grateful to my own choosiness as a child that I never read Soviet literature. I escaped its corruptions.

—You managed, in fact, to develop on a small and rudimentary scale something like your own sense of values and culture? A remarkable feat for a young boy.

BUKOVSKY: In a modest sense, yes. I would not go so far as to call it an "alternative culture", for my friends and I were too young and ignorant to think in such sophisticated terms; but as far as my own aesthetic ideas and values were concerned, yes, I think I did begin to develop alternative ways of feeling and being.

—In prison, your castle was, in fact, a life-saver. In the frightening void of your solitary confinement you hung on to it the way a drowning man hangs on to a lifebelt. Or, if you like, it was a source of hope, as faith and prayer are for a believer.

BUKOVSKY: It was all those things, but the castle also performed the simple function of occupying my mind and keeping it concentrated. This was most important. I knew people who went berserk in solitary. Any systematic thinking helped —such as remembering the plot of a classic novel, or solving mathematical problems.

—There are indeed many examples. George Faludy, the distinguished Hungarian poet, committed a large number of poems to his own and his fellow inmates' memory when he was in prison in Recsk. More recently, Irina Ratushinskaya preserved her sanity by writing poems even though she had nothing to write with.

BUKOVSKY: Please, don't mention poetry to me as a means of escape; I'm allergic to the stuff. We had a surfeit of poets and poetry in our movement. Poetry seemed to be oozing out of the pores of every young Russian who had a grudge against the Soviet system. Verses, poetry readings, and budding poets flaunting their alleged talent—I had my fill of all that by the time I was 19!

But you are quite right: the castle was a symbolic and *real* means of escape. You could hide behind its walls; it imparted privacy and security.

SOME POLITICAL PRISONERS in the Soviet Union needed all the religious faith they could summon to steel themselves for survival. You are said to be an agnostic—or is it an atheist? I would have thought a devout Baptist, or an Orthodox person like Solzhenitsyn, might wonder how you did it, seeing that so much of your challenge to the system had spiritual roots which were, nevertheless, not of the religious kind.

BUKOVSKY: You are asking me a question I have deliberately tried not to answer, because it is probably too early for me to answer it; but here is what occurs to me. My generation had brought itself up to disbelieve in religion. Our reaction was not against Christianity, but against Stalin and the worship of Stalin. We had been raised in the Communist religion, which we knew was nonsensical. We felt we had been betrayed and misled by our elders. The ceaseless and ubiquitous adoration of Stalin was a powerful vaccination against any form of belief—so believing, for me, became a symbol of gullibility.

—You went through the Pioneers and the usual Soviet education. You must have been very much part and parcel of the cult of Stalin.

BUKOVSKY: I was. I was eleven when Stalin died. As a child I did believe in Stalin, and thought he was something very close to being God. We sang his praise in prose, verse, and cantatas. The older generation had a broader view because they could remember the time before Stalin and the build-up of Stalinism. Those who decided to go along with the glorification of Stalin did so on rational or opportunistic grounds. But we were *handed* the cult of Stalin as a doctrine, and consequently rejected every type of faith as part of our opposition to the worship of Stalin. But our rejection did not end there. We hated and rejected "socialism" and all the other *in*-words of the Communist vocabulary as well, simply because they had been rammed down our throats by the Communist Party as part of the official philosophy. Children don't discriminate. Whatever had to be done under duress we rejected.

—Did you, nevertheless, appreciate the particular tenacity of the Baptists and Pentecostalists among your fellow inmates?

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We have much evidence that religious believers were more successful than most in keeping their integrity and hope alive. You will remember the record of Pastor Bonhoeffer and Father Kolbe under the Nazis, and one could quote the testimony of any number of religious prisoners in Communist camps. Irina Ratushinskaya is a good recent example.

BUKOVSKY: Religious faith gave strength to some people, but on the whole it appeared to me artificial and superficial. In a prison cell you get to know your fellow inmates extremely well—too well. One is not meant to know everything about another human being, but when you share a prison cell, you cannot avoid it. So it was that I found out more than I would have wished about the minds of my colleagues in prison; and so it was that I came to the conclusion that religious believers made unpleasant inmates.

—Were they intolerant?

BUKOVSKY: Not really—in a cell you have to be tolerant. It was rather that their faith did not strike me as being genuine. They were trying hard to convince themselves that they believed when in fact they did not. I could not trust their sincerity. For example: I was, at the time, pretty well versed in the Bible. The reason was that I had been asked to translate certain religious texts which contained a great many biblical quotations. This made me familiarise myself with the Old and New Testaments which I got to know pretty well (I have by now forgotten much of both). Well, one of the things you do a great deal in prison is to argue. I frequently fell into argument with religious prisoners and found to my amazement that their knowledge of the Bible was very small, or nil. Their faith was a new thing, a lifebelt under adverse conditions.

I am, mind you, not belittling the importance of having a lifebelt, but the faith of these people was skin-deep. Of course, I also met prisoners with deep religious convictions whom I admired and respected. One was a Ukrainian, Levko Lukyanenko, who was serving fifteen years when I shared a cell with him, and got another fifteen years as soon as he was set free for having joined the Helsinki Monitoring Group. He was serene about his fate.

—Did many of the religious prisoners acquire their faith actually in prison, under the pressures of imprisonment?

BUKOVSKY: Quite a few did. It was remarkable that people who had arrived in prison as Marxists were the most likely to change their Marxist convictions for religious ones. I knew Marxist Ukrainians who became fervent Christians and Marxist Jews who had forgotten all about their Jewish background but developed, in prison, a fervent Orthodox Jewish identity. This tells you something about the kind of mind these people had to begin with: they needed an ideology of some sort to relieve them of uncertainty; and if Marxism-Leninism could no longer do it, some other belief had to be put in its place.

THE HISTORY of Communism in Western Europe provides similar examples—disillusioned Communists turning to Catholicism or other forms of religion to replace, as you say, the loss of an all-interpreting set of values and ideas, and, above all, to give them hope.

BUKOVSKY: But you can have hope without religion. This may, however, not be the whole truth. The man who convinced me that hope without religion may not be enough for some people was Armando Valladares, whose book I have just read and written about.[1] Here is a man who is deeply religious and, like most genuinely believing people, does not like talking about his faith—perhaps because he is conscious of *Matthew* 6, 5-6,[2] perhaps because his natural modesty forbids him to do so. He is in Castro's prison, as he thinks, for life. He is exposed to the daily horrors of Cuban imprisonment—torture, humiliation, the sound of executions—and comes face to face with the fact that "here I may have to die". Under these terrible conditions religion gives him strength. "My imprisonment and my death will have an ethical meaning", he says. "Ethical meaning"— *that* I fully understand. If your life has to be sacrificed in the struggle against a great evil, you want to feel that your sacrifice fits into a meaningful order of things.

—I am fairly sure that if one collected an anthology of the last cries of those about to be executed, your point would be borne out by the evidence. Those I have come across in my life and in Western literature stress the condemned man's loyalty to some principle that will, as he hopes, not die with him . . . to country, cause, faith, or even ideology.

But I'm not sure I would agree with your observation that the religion of those who acquire it under the pressures of hardship is necessarily less profound or less worthy of our respect than of those who are given it at birth or acquire it under more serene conditions. I would have thought the acquisition of faith under extreme conditions is perhaps the most common and most human way of acquiring it, even though it may well be true that religion so acquired is less well informed than a man of high culture would wish. The Sermon on the Mount offers the Kingdom of Heaven to those "which are persecuted for righteousness' sake", but does not demand that they should be well-versed in religious literature. On the contrary, it is enough to be "pure in heart" to be admitted to the sight of God. Irina Ratushinskaya tells us: "I had started to appeal to Him some fifteen years before I held any religious literature in my hands. . . ."

BUKOVSKY: I didn't mean to belittle the sincerity of the conversion of a person suddenly bereaved or struck down by some mindless act of man or nature. Sickness, frustration, poverty and defeat are part of the human condition, and

[1] *Against All Hope: The Prison Memoirs of Armando Valladares* (Hamish Hamilton, 1986).

[2] "Again, when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; they love to say their prayers standing up in synagogue and at the street-corners, for everyone to see them. I tell you this: they have their reward already. But when you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is there in the secret place; and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you."

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those who cannot deal with them rationally seek a meaning and consolation in religion. This I respect. What I did not like in some of my fellow inmates was the transparent opportunism with which they changed from what they thought had been a winning horse to another which now looked more likely to be first past the post.

No amount of charity, not even the parable of the prodigal son, can persuade me to respect the Christianity of a man whose Marxism got unstuck and who therefore decided in his cluelessness to turn to another "divinity". You see, sincerity of faith is also a Christian requirement.

"Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven", Jesus says in *Matthew* soon after the words you have quoted, and he warns those who are insincere that they will be punished: "Then I will tell them to their face, 'I never knew you: out of my sight, you and your wicked ways!'" (*Matthew* 7, 21-23).

—I don't think we can take this further without starting a different discussion. But you said: one could have hope without religion. This sounds commonsensical enough, but what in particular did you have in mind in the context of resisting the pressures of imprisonment?

BUKOVSKY: You can believe in your destiny—a destiny that tells you that you must challenge the wrong and the lies that surround you. What we had in my own case and the cases of my friends was, so to speak, a conspiracy of the hopeless. We never expected to be able to achieve any of the liberties we wanted. Personally I had a persuasive feeling that there was no way out, but the same feeling told me that I must preserve my sanity and fight the ideological insanity that surrounded us; and if I was to suffer and die for doing so, I might as well die sane. That was all.

Our movement was highly impractical. We never sought to achieve anything concrete; we never had a "programme". In the event, we achieved, to our amazement, a hundredfold what any of us imagined could be achieved, and did so perhaps precisely because we hadn't done any planning. We were being propelled by an inner feeling of necessity. Certain challenges *had* to be met, certain lies *had* to be nailed, certain absurdities *had* to be unmasked. This was something

Freedom of Conscience

IN CAMPS—especially political camps—the primary aim of the administration and the *KGB* is to break the prisoners spiritually, make them renounce their principles and convictions. I knew this before I went into the camp and was prepared for it.

Of course, anger is the natural first reaction, and rejection of the surrounding evil can easily turn into hatred, especially in the conditions of the camps, in close confinement, in the absence of contact with the outside world.

JUST AS WE DO NOT *select our relatives, so you cannot select your fellow-prisoners. People forced into close confinement are in a similar position to cosmonauts who have to spend months in space in cramped quarters. However, they are chosen for psychological compatibility, and this was not a privilege extended to us.*

We all knew that the camp officials would spare no efforts to stir up discord among us, and were prepared for it. Therefore none of us ever believed what camp officials and the KGB said when they tried to provoke misunderstandings. This helped us to give each other moral support even in the most difficult moments. When any one of us was having a particularly hard time, we would all sense it, and rally around as best we could to help her. This was a firm tradition in our little political zone.

I HARDLY RECEIVED **any mail at all in the camp—this is one of the favourite methods of punishment for any alleged "transgressions" by the prisoners—and I spent more time in solitary punishment cells than anyone else in our zone.**

This does not mean that people should not write to prisoners: it is vital that they do, for even if the prisoner does not get the letters, it shows the Soviet authorities the measure of concern for this or that person in the West. And that can make a great deal of difference to the prisoner's ultimate fate. If the authorities think that nobody cares, then they feel free to treat the prisoner however they will.

I KNEW THAT THERE WAS *support for me in the West by a process of deduction. The more the authorities try to convince you to yield your positions, the more they try to convince you that everyone has forgotten all about you, the more support that means you are getting from outside. So I had reason to believe that I had a lot of support. Even so, it was not until I got out of prison, and then out of the USSR, that I realised just how enormous that support was.*

But even apart from that, while I was still in the camp, we all—my fellow prisoners and I—were frequently aware, actually physically aware, of the support of prayer. It is very hard to explain, it sounds very mystical, but we all, at varying times, felt what could be described as an active flow of strength, a sort of warmth; and bearing in mind the icy conditions of punishment cells, this warmth could only have been the force of prayer, sustaining and protecting us.

MY PLANS? **First, I want to write a book about women's labour camps in the Soviet Union, not just the political camps, but the ordinary criminal ones, for I have seen those too. This will be a documentary work, but aimed at a broad readership which does not necessarily have any prior knowledge of the situation in the USSR, of Soviet law, etc.**

I also want to write an autobiography which will reflect how someone of my generation [b.1954] comes to grips with the Soviet régime, and what puts people on the path of dissent.

Irina Ratushinskaya

THE RUSSIAN POET *Irina Ratushinskaya and her husband Igor Gerashenko were allowed to leave the Soviet Union just before Christmas last year. Irina had spent four years in Soviet prisons and labour camps under sentence for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" as a result of her literary and human-rights activities. The following are excerpts from an interview she gave to the editors of the Keston College journal, "Frontier".*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we knew in our bones. We had to do it for self-respect, for sanity, for human dignity.

We were in the grip of an elementary revolt of the mind—but we had, as I say, no pragmatic model to guide us. We didn't want to "change" anything. We rebelled because we had been driven to rebellion. It was a question of self-preservation.

—Those Poles, Hungarians and Czechs who talk nowadays about an "alternative culture" and alternative ways of being and feeling are led, I am convinced, by a similar, uncalculating, elementary sense of rebellion. All rebellions in history tend to start in that manner—the programmes and rationalisations (and frequently the admissions of non possumus*) come later.*

BUKOVSKY: Looking back on that period, I would say we shared Albert Camus's philosophy more than any other. We rebelled because Authority told us, "You are going to be different", and we said "We are not!" We didn't just react to specific acts of arbitrary rule. We acted from a deep-seated conviction that our inner sovereignty was under attack and that we had to stand up for it. The mental pollution had to stop.

YOU HAVE SEEN *the record of my conversation with Alain Besançon.*[3] *We talked about the unreality of Soviet reality, the deadly farce of make-believe.*

BUKOVSKY: Yes. Besançon's analysis is, I feel, spot on: he is one of the sharpest observers of the Soviet system. Soviet unreality is all-pervasive even though everyone knows it to be unreal.

—Did you fall into some of those semantic traps that go with this unreal reality? Did you act as though the unreality had been real?

BUKOVSKY: I read that part of your conversation with Besançon very carefully and thought I was lucky to have been born too late to have to contend with the full force of the collective schizophrenia that gripped Russia under Stalin. By the time I was politically conscious enough to grasp what was happening around me I had developed great distaste for all things Soviet and created a private world for myself (based, as I said, on classical literature). I simply lived outside what remained of the unreality—and plenty remained and remains to this day.

My political consciousness was the result of having read Alexander Herzen: he instilled in me the language of protest. The need to seek an alternative to the Soviet system was there in my mind from the beginning. That you can't instil; you either have it or you haven't. But the cutting edge of my attitude was due to Herzen's formulations.

—Would you look upon yourself as a "Westerniser"?

BUKOVSKY: I'm certainly not a Slavophile. I share many of Herzen's ideas but I'm a scientist by inclination and profession. I never saw much sense in making a sharp, not to say divisive, distinction between "Slavophiles" and "Westernisers".

—Do you agree with Alain Besançon's characterisation of you as a man who has taken the logical step of not only rejecting Soviet unreality, but of purging his mind of the last scraps of Soviet consciousness by the simple device of having his mind reshaped by science?

> **"I admire Vladimir Bukovsky. He took the conscious decision that it was not enough to be a dissident and an émigré. He took up biology as a hard science because he knew that the habit of mind that goes with scientific inquiry would immunise him against ideology more effectively than any 'counter-ideology'. . . . Bukovsky's way is the honourable way, and the only one that can be really effective."**

BUKOVSKY: I'm afraid Besançon may be admiring me for the wrong reasons. My interest in biology is an old thing—I had it as a child and adolescent. I did not develop it as a reaction to the semantic traps of Soviet ideology. It's true, though, that biology helped me and still helps me to keep the insanities of Sovietism at bay. It's an implied corrective to nonsense.

One also has to remember that in the Soviet Union science is the common escape of intellectuals who want to keep their integrity—science and mathematics. These disciplines are extremely difficult to politicise. They provide a safe haven for those who want to use their minds to some purpose and evade the corruptions of the system. That is why there are so many scientists in the USSR and why theoretical physics, for example, is so highly developed.

—The number of Soviet mathematicians and physicists American universities are able to absorb always struck me as just short of a miracle, especially at a time of retrenchment.

BUKOVSKY: It is, as I say, explained by the large numbers, and the high quality that competition produces. The gifted Russian's escape from ideology ultimately benefits Western science and technology. . . .

—A short-sighted policy which Gorbachov should be anxious to correct.

BUKOVSKY: He should, but whether he can is quite another matter. But to come back to your question about semantics: my first clash with Soviet thinking came at school when I was about fourteen. Official dogma required us to believe that man's mind is shaped by economic and social forces. I revolted against this idea and did so empirically: here I was, an urchin, living with criminals under miserable housing conditions in one of the poor districts of post-War Moscow. Was I

[3] See, in ENCOUNTER (May and June 1987), George Urban and Alain Besançon, "Language & Power in Soviet Society".

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being shaped by my social environment? Not at all. I was developing ideas that were diametrically *opposed* to my environment.

Here was my great friend Kolka. He came from a large and equally poor family where the father was a drunkard, the mother a prostitute, a couple of the sons were criminals—and yet Kolka was a most decent fellow.

"How is all this possible, teacher?", I said to our schoolmaster. I just wouldn't buy his rubbish. I believed that there was something at the core of every human being that was not shaped by economics or the environment—that man was autonomous. At the time I didn't realise that I was questioning the very basis of the Marxist system. That came to me a little later, but I was glad to have done so so early in life.

IF WE WERE TO BE *very pedantic we might add that the Marxist canon was somewhat amended by Engels's interpretation. Writing (to J. Bloch) on 21 September 1890, he stressed that "according to the materialistic conception of history, the production and reproduction of real life constitutes* **in the last instance** *the determining factor of history. Neither Marx nor I ever maintained more."*

Engels pointed out that constitutions, legal theories, political and religious conceptions and institutions all have an impact on determining the course of history, and those Marxists who thought otherwise misunderstood the theory and were turning out "a rare kind of tommy-rot". He added almost by way of apology that—well, to make a point is not enough. You have to drive it home by exaggerating your message and shocking the reader into agreement:

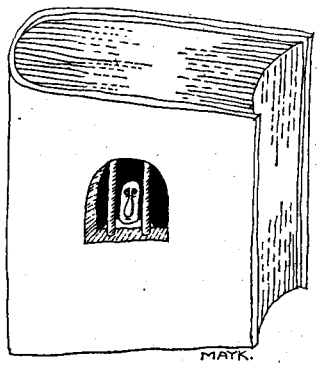
> **"Marx and I are partly responsible for the fact that at times our disciples have laid more weight upon the economic factor than belongs to it. We were compelled to emphasise its central character in opposition to our opponents who denied it, and there wasn't always time, place and occasion to do justice to the other factors in the reciprocal interactions of the historical process."**

BUKOVSKY: At school we were, of course, not made aware of such refinements. Indeed the Soviet system is based on a very narrow interpretation of Marx, and that was the kind of Marx we had rammed down our throats.

—"Vulgar-Marxism", as Georg Lukács was in the habit of calling it in 1945 and 1946 in his lectures at the (Bishop) Pázmány Péter University (as it then was) in Budapest—without, of course, saying whom he had in mind as the "vulgarisers".

BUKOVSKY: Whatever Engels may have said about applying shock tactics to beat down the opposition, the fact is that the logic of Marxism does require that the economic-social factor be recognised as the determining factor in understanding society. It was that factor (whether correctly interpreted or not) that gave the Bolshevik Revolution its legitimacy and the entire Soviet system its *raison d'être*. I happen to believe that Soviet society is a highly accurate realisation of the Marxist canons. It is, at best, a half-truth to say that Marxism degenerated in Russian hands—that it assumed the despotic characteristics of Russian history of the last 400 or so years. It is precisely because the system is so true to Marx that it is at odds with human nature. And that is why it is so repellent and ultimately untenable. I learned all this, as I say, at the tender age of fourteen in the slums of Moscow, and to this day I have had no reason to change my mind.

2. *The Costs of Inner Freedom*



WOULD I BE RIGHT *in thinking that imprisonment for you was in some ways a refuge from the feverish life of a dissident—a place of retreat, if you like, where you could read and think and "recharge the batteries"? Some of your observations in your memoirs lead me to that conclusion. In one place you say that you were, after your "hectic" life outside, quite glad to be sent to the Lefortovo Prison because "nothing depended on me any longer". Did you gain a sense of inner freedom that had eluded you outside?*

BUKOVSKY: I told you at the beginning of this conversation that our little movement was launched—launched itself, would be a better way of putting it—with a very simple moral idea. We said: "As far as we're concerned, we are not going to be part of the machinery of official society. Leave us alone." We weren't planning to make a revolution. We had no programme. We were just anxious to isolate ourselves from the whole polluting unreality of the Soviet system.

Little did we suspect that in a totalitarian system there is no such thing as neutrality or isolation. The moment we did what we did, we were making a highly political statement which was immediately seen as such both by the Soviet authorities and by observers abroad. But, more important, we were ourselves soon forced to see our activities in that light, too. We discovered that our "dissent" thrust responsibility on us for all sorts of things we had never considered our responsibility: the nation, the state of society, liberty, and so on. We became the centre of social and political turmoil, and having said *a* we had to say *b*, too. We came face to face with the notion of responsibility concerning a whole range of questions which made our original wish to live away from Soviet society in calculated isolation rather Utopian.

For me, this meant a kind of enslavement. I was and I am a very private person. I am happiest when I'm left alone. I dislike all forms of social involvement, and I hate politics. You can imagine how unhappy I was to discover that my ambition to be lifted out of Soviet reality had plunged me even deeper into it.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I didn't *ask* to be imprisoned and I didn't *like* it inside, but I was quite determined to make the best of an unpleasant situation and utilise it in very practical ways. I learned English; I studied biology; I buried myself in books that one couldn't obtain outside but were readily available in the prison libraries. No one in the *KGB* had thought of raiding the *prison* libraries for forbidden literature! In that sense, I was freer than I had been outside.

—Some prisoners looked upon imprisonment as an occasion for introspection—or doing penance for mistaken lives, a sinful ideology, whatever. In the Great Purge of 1937-38 faithful Communists were searching their hearts in prison to discover where they had gone wrong in interpreting the sacred books—whether Stalin had been misled by dishonest courtiers and so on. Alexander Weissberg gave us one good account in his book "The Accused" (1951).

Bukovsky: I was totally untouched by ideology; I was a realist. What I did find prison quite useful for was the inner freedom it gave me to think for myself, to test myself, and to get to know other people. The prison cell is an incomparable laboratory for looking into the hidden recesses of the human soul, for discovering what motivates people, for analysing their fears and phobias. Prison offers you a Shakespearean panorama of human nature, and that is a great source of education.

Another thing I discovered in prison was the scope of my own mind. I suddenly found that my head was full of ideas—ideas I had no time to concentrate on when I was outside; in prison I had the inner freedom to sort them out.

—Weren't you, then, really in retreat?

Let me tell you about a somewhat analogous experience I underwent some twenty years ago. I was sent to hospital with mumps—I'd caught it from my children. This, for me, was "prison". I had a high temperature—high enough to make me see the world in its (as I thought) true dimensions. The problems I had brought in from "outside" kept bubbling to the surface of my mind—but they seemed trivial. Did I really worry about such things "out there"? Why—they had such simple and obvious solutions! Suddenly, right and wrong stood out with great clarity. There was a transparency on the faces of people I saw walking in the hospital gardens. They were going somewhere with a purpose. The sun shone on the late February snow with an openness that seemed to be saying: this is the way snow and sun were meant to be since the day of Creation. The world was "transfigured" and my mind was at rest. If I didn't feel, "God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world", I felt something pretty close to it.

Friends of mine who spent time in prison tell me that they underwent similar changes of perspective.

Bukovsky: That happened to me only under severe conditions—when I was put in solitary or went on hunger-strike. On such occasions, it is true, my confused ideas had simple and often beautiful solutions, and many things I could not disentangle outside fell into place. But let me tell you, as a physiologist, that the arrival of that august transparency and plasticity of things that seem unattainable outside prison is a deception. Once you are back in your normal surroundings, the complications and grey colours reassert themselves.

Might it not be the case that high fever, solitary confinement, or simply isolation through imprisonment induce us to imagine that we are in the "anti-chamber of death", with all the happy hallucinations that the act of dying is sometimes said to conjure up in our minds?

At the same Hungarian University where I heard Lukács lecture after the War, the philosopher Pal Harkay-Schiller ran a somewhat unconventional seminar on human behaviour in extreme situations.

"Have any of you ever been dead, ladies and gentlemen?", he asked a startled audience one fine spring morning. As many of the students had just come back from the War, from concentration camps, or Soviet captivity, the answer to that question was frequently "Yes—in a way. . . ."

What the professor wanted us to describe was the mind of a man on the verge of death—and we had people in our seminar who had been put up against a wall but were, at the last minute, not shot for some reason; soldiers who had been abandoned for dead in the Russian winter; a girl who had been herded into a gas-chamber but came out alive because that morning the pressure was insufficient for the killings; and the like. What came out of this rather gruesome questioning was accounts of "fear and trembling"—but of fear resolved, as the supposed moment of death moved closer, by a great calm, a sense of overpowering clarity, and a resolution of all the tangles.

Bukovsky: I did, to some extent, have a similar experience while I was in a punishment cell in 1974. I had been on hunger strike and was badly undernourished. I was suffering from stomach ulcers and in constant pain. My skin was peeling off. I was so weak that standing up was an effort, and when I did manage to stand up, the world was in a spin around me. I was convinced that I would die but the consciousness of death approaching didn't make me panic. I was composed, serene, stoical. "So this is what it feels like to die", I thought to myself, as I watched my reactions with the eyes of an outsider.

Yes, I did feel a great peace descending on me, but it was the peace of helplessness and resignation rather than the kind of august clarity and disentanglement that your Hungarian veteran students seem to have experienced.

Experiences of this sort vary. I had Lithuanian partisans in my cell who had fought in the Lithuanian resistance and were barely alive when they were captured. They had hallucinations, but whether these were healing hallucinations of an all-encompassing "transfiguration" or hallucinations inspired by animal fear, I could not tell.

—Do you miss prison?

Bukovsky: No, I don't.

—Did you ever miss it?

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BUKOVSKY: No, I didn't, but the great advantage of living in a free society is that you can create your own seclusion, your own solitude, if that is what you need for your work or your happiness. You cannot call this house I live in "a prison"; but very often I lock myself in, don't answer the door or the telephone, don't go out for meals, because I have something to think over or write. I need the concentration of solitude because I hate writing and find it extremely difficult.

—You create your own prison. . . .

BUKOVSKY: Yes, but you cannot equate a freely chosen seclusion with imprisonment.

—My reading of Solzhenitsyn's life-style in Vermont is that he feels deprived without the constraints and regularity of camp life and is trying to recreate them. The electric fence around his grounds and his great reluctance to see people or even pick up the telephone are telling us something.

BUKOVSKY: Only that the man is busy writing and doesn't want to be distracted or interrupted. His fence is a signal-wire to keep out the moose and elk, nothing more sinister. He has a large estate.

—Solzhenitsyn's work came out of the challenge of two concentric prisons: the general prison of Soviet society and, within it, the camp in which he was held. My impression is that he is slightly ill-at-ease in the permissive climate of American society. Hence the fence and the monastic order in his life.

BUKOVSKY: I don't know Solzhenitsyn all that well, but I do know that he is engaged in monumental labour. The sheer size of his output makes it essential for him to be functional and economical with his time and energy. Indeed, his self-imposed régime in Vermont is so rigorous that it outdoes the austerity and regularity of prisons I have known. Whether, and to what extent, he "needs his prison" I cannot tell you, because there is, as I say, an alternative explanation. But it is possible that both explanations are in a sense true, or even that they feed on one another.

ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV once told me that he felt deprived without his Soviet "collective". I would have thought that, for Solzhenitsyn, Soviet camp life was the speck of sand that irritates the oyster into producing the pearl. American society is uncompetitive in that respect.

BUKOVSKY: It's possible; but we'll have to suspend judgment until Alexander Solzhenitsyn comes along to tell us. He is most unlikely to say "I need my camp", but I doubt whether that would make you change your analysis of why he lives the way he does.

—I once had a discussion with Don Salvador de Madariaga on a similar topic, taking Arnold Toynbee's "challenge-and-response" for our cue. We were wondering where one should draw the line between "useful hardship" and "hardship that kills"; for it was clear to us that a man or civilisation that has too easy a time of it, or is just treading water, is unlikely to be creative. We observed that between the unchallenged type of human life and the experiences of Auschwitz there were many gradations of hardship that put the right mixture of pressures on us to make us more "creative" or just more "fully rounded" and more sensitive human beings. I took the view that a good deal of historically- or socially-induced suffering was good for us. Salvador de Madariaga, on the other hand, felt that the ordinary hardships of human life—sickness, bereavement, frustration, the terrors of old age, the disloyalty of friends, and so on—were enough to equip us with the "right" amount of suffering, and there was no need to ask a Franco or a Stalin to provide additional punishment, or to have famine or war visited upon society. He was probably right.

It seems to me that your own experiences fall into the category of profitable suffering, for imprisonment and the pressures of Soviet society in the 1960s and 1970s—though still appalling by Western standards—were no longer what they had been under Stalin.

BUKOVSKY: Freedom is an inner quality which cannot be bestowed or taken away by anyone but yourself. Using for a moment the crude terms of the market economy, I would say you can almost always have your freedom if you are willing to pay the price for it. In the Soviet system the price of freedom is exceptionally high, in the Western liberal democracies it is exceptionally low. In a Soviet prison you may decide to help a friend who has been unjustly punished, and be punished yourself for helping him. Or else you may decide, "I'll ignore it", and escape punishment. The choice is yours; it's a question of how much you are prepared to pay for your inner freedom. I was gratified to read that Valladares in Cuba felt the same, although his imprisonment by a vindictive Castro was closer to the horrors of Stalin's camps and prisons than mine was.

It's been frequently held against me that "Ah, but your time inside was a mild affair! You could talk back; you could demand to read the Soviet Constitution—and the prison governor himself would bring it to you so that you could write your complaints. You could lecture your interrogators. You could do many things, because the context had been changed and torture had been ruled out. Now, in 1938! In 1938 they would have beaten you into pulp, and your friends abroad would never have heard about it."

Well, it's perfectly true that under Stalin the price of inner freedom was exceedingly high, but even then you could attain it. Varlam Shalamov, who spent years under severe conditions in the frozen Far East in one of the worst of Stalin's camps, tells us that even there you could preserve your inner freedom.[4] The price was high—oh, it was high!—but you could have it. In other words, so long as the system doesn't kill you, you're likely to emerge a "better", a "more sensitive" man.

[4] See, in ENCOUNTER (April 1980), two stories from Varlam Shalamov's, *Kolyma Tales*, translated by John Glad and published by W. W. Norton (1980).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—But what, in your judgment, would be the right mix of hardships? Poets, playwrights, philosophers have given us a great many memorable words about the creative beauty of unrequited love, the fascinations of "Inferno" as distinct from the placid tedium of "Paradiso", and the like. But one wonders whether people undergoing the agonies of unrequited love, or roasting in the fires of "Inferno", would approve of their ordeal if you told them: "Ah, but you are the anvil on which the future Dantes and Goethes will hammer out their immortal work!"

BUKOVSKY: To forge character, promote independent thinking or even to fulfil himself, man needs to run into obstacles and be constantly challenged. When I lived in the USA I noticed that most people around me in California were miserable although they lived in highly relaxed and comfortable conditions. Why? Because they lacked the challenges of hardship. They were in search, not of food or shelter, but of *themselves*. They had "identity crises". The Californian asked "Who am I?", and went off to the psychiatrist to find a reassuring answer. And it wasn't only Californians, but Americans in general who seemed to suffer from the sort of self-questioning that comes from too much comfort, too much superficial living, and too little suffering.

Challenges can have degrees of usefulness. There are challenges that stimulate some people but not others. Suffering, too, has its gradations. Some lead you to a better understanding of the human condition while others send you into depression. There are anvils that temper you and anvils that kill you. Hardship may lead some people of strong character and great stamina to feats of creativity, religious insight, sacrifice and the like, but these exceptional achievements are usually attained under conditions that would simply destroy the majority of ordinary people.

So let's not rejoice too much over the achievement of those who were lucky enough to become heroes, because the peaks they represent for us are surrounded by mounds of the unsung dead. I will never subscribe to the argument that the Soviet system is good for you because its particular beastliness produces exceptional dissidents. The novelist C. P. Snow could not bring himself to criticise censorship in the USSR because he felt it showed that Russian writers were being taken seriously! . . . No, the price is too high, far too high.

—But you do agree that challenge and hardship are necessary for the good of any society; and a Christian society, which most of our societies still say they are, should, in theory at least, welcome suffering as a gift that brings members of that society closer to the sacrifice of Christ?

BUKOVSKY: Well, the British have understood in their instinctive and inarticulate way that hardship is essential to the stamina and character of society. Whether it is the Puritanical heritage or some less elevated factor (such as indifference and apathy) that has induced them to live their lives under maximum discomfort, the fact is that their lives are about as uncomfortable as it is possible to make them in the 20th century. Most of their homes are uninsulated and ill-heated. Their beds tend to be damp, too short, and too narrow. Their food is indifferently cooked and available only at highly restricted hours. Their bathrooms are cold; their trains draughty, noisy, underheated and unpunctual. Their plumbing is unique in the Western world in that it stops functioning at three degrees of frost; and so on.

Can all these be coincidences? I don't think so. There is, at the back of the minds of the British people, a subconscious assumption that too much comfort is bad for your character and that you need to be challenged.

—Your explanation has the virtue of being all of a piece, but that, I fear, does not necessarily make it true. While the tradition of self-mortification and "doing without" has deep roots in British culture, the characteristics you describe have to do more with basic inefficiency and straightforward indolence than a by now (alas) vanished Puritanical Christian past. Let's not, however, be tempted into a discussion of "The English—are they human?".

BUKOVSKY: Let me add just one thing: British middle-class parents never stop telling me how much they suffered in public school and how much they hated it. But the first thing they do when their children reach school-going age is to send them to the same public schools, where conditions are not dissimilar from those one has in Vladimir Prison: harsh discipline, the tyranny of the older "inmates", physical punishment, poor food, and so on. Parents wouldn't do this to their children if they didn't feel that those tough conditions were "good" for them and their nation—unless, of course, there is another factor at play here: the British people's peculiar attitude to children. I was amazed to see that the British do not like children and do not treat them well. They prefer pets. Whether this has to do with self-hatred in the Puritanical sense (the child being the carrier *in nuce* of original sin, which has so powerful a hold on you as an adult) would require more profound thinking than we can give it in this conversation.

YOU SAID a little earlier that there are, in a totalitarian society, no neutral topics. Even your attempt as a member of a group of adolescents to isolate yourself from Soviet reality became a political statement which saddled you with responsibility for things entirely outside your personal experience.

I was glad to hear you say that, because it confirms what I have been telling my friends and colleagues ("communicators") for a number of years. Communication by radio to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, for example, brooks neutrality as little as does Soviet society—and this is something Western politicians and communicators do not always find easy to understand.

BUKOVSKY: The Western approach to propaganda—let us be absolutely clear, at least in our own minds, that it is propaganda we are talking about—is strangely antiquated. It is an attitude that pre-dates radio, pre-dates newspapers, and belongs to the steam-age of communication. It fails to appre-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ciate what totalitarian society is like and how it goes about conditioning the mind of the citizen. The word "propaganda" has come to be looked upon as unclean, and in American usage the awful euphemism of "public diplomacy" has taken its place. This prissy attitude is something to be marvelled at. It reminds me of Queen Victoria's reaction to the news brought to her by an adviser that a submarine had been successfully tested and that this offered a revolutionary addition to British naval power. "I don't want to hear about that", she is alleged to have said. "It is utterly un-English for officers of the Royal Navy to fight enemy shipping without showing their colours."

—Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, had the audacity a few years ago to compliment the BBC on its excellent track record in international "propaganda", expressing the hope that it would do even better in the future. The BBC's indignation was boundless. The then Managing Director of the External Services protested in the "Letters" column of "The Times" that the BBC was doing no such thing. It was providing objective news and fair comment. As a wartime listener to the BBC I can testify that propaganda is exactly what the BBC does and did, but it does it with such consummate skill and so fine a sense of hypocrisy that it manages to lure its own communicators into believing that what it does is not propaganda. Such self-deception is, surely, the hallmark of the best in propaganda.

BUKOVSKY: The ineptitude of the Americans in this area is especially surprising. It is they who invented advertising, both crude and subliminal, and yet their understanding of the Soviet attitude to propaganda is infantile and their inclination to play that particular intellectual game to good effect is small. What the Americans don't realise is that, at the turn of the 21st century, communication in the international field is one of the weapons (and, I would say, one of the vital and indispensable weapons) in the West's continuing engagement with the Soviet system. Anyone who has studied Lenin and has learned the first three lessons about the Soviet system knows the immense importance Communism attaches to "agitation and propaganda", both in keeping the system on a steady keel and in subverting its supposed critics and adversaries abroad.

That is why there is no such thing as "objective" broadcasting to the Soviet Union. Putting Shakespeare on the air is a most political act (need I say why?). Broadcasting jazz and rock music is a political act. Recounting the history of Kievan Russia is a political act—and *not* broadcasting the history of Kievan Russia is a political act, too. When you address yourself to a totalitarian system, whatever you say or don't say is a political statement. That American Senators and Congressmen do not grasp this is something I cannot understand, except in the rather devastating sense of the USA not considering itself to be a player in the field of world politics. If that is really so, we're all in trouble.

—You are echoing a sentiment Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick expressed in the melancholy sentence: "The Soviets are playing to win, whereas we are trying to get out of the game." She expressed it, mind you, critically—I don't believe she would want to get out of the game; indeed, I'm certain she would want to win it—but your description of the USA as a reluctant player is not unlike hers.

BUKOVSKY: Here is something about the character of Americans that people in the Soviet Union find hard to comprehend. A superpower given to high moral rhetoric but unable to see which side its bread is buttered! I sometimes feel that the USA is either too virtuous or too infantile to deal with the affairs of this sinful world. The two may even be connected.

"IRANGATE", it is claimed, has weakened the American Presidency—and weakened it, in the European judgment, unnecessarily. It is said to be another "own-goal" in a series in which we cannot afford too many. Will Moscow rejoice or snigger?

BUKOVSKY: It isn't as clear-cut as that. In one sense—yes, the Soviet leaders are rejoicing. The US government has lost some of its credibility; the President's authority is undermined; it doesn't now take a lot of daring to twist the lion's tail. The Soviets realise that the USA has suddenly become more vulnerable, and lost no time exploiting this weakness to improve the Soviet position in Afghanistan.

For let me assure you that it is by no means coincidental that the Soviet "truce-offensive"—the offer to recognise Islam as the official creed of a future Afghanistan, and the bizarre move to lure back the King—were made at a time of maximum American confusion in high places. Dobrynin knows what he is about. At any other time, Washington would have exposed such Soviet moves as propaganda, but with the Iranian scandal on their hands, the Americans were subdued and, by omission, they allowed the Soviets to score some important points in the world contest of ideas.

The Kremlin is also gratified to see the Presidency's authority generally weakened: after the revelations of Irangate, any American President will find it much harder to run undercover operations of the kind the Soviets are so adept at running against the USA. Congress has done some of the Soviets' work for them.

—Are you saying that the American Constitutional system is inadequate for dealing with totalitarian régimes?

BUKOVSKY: That is exactly what I am saying. It is antiquated. It is 200 years old. Two hundred years ago it was not unrealistic for Americans to imagine that they could keep out of "foreign entanglements". Even during much of the 19th century the USA could rely on the protection of the seas and the British Navy. Not today. It takes a missile fifteen minutes to cross the globe, and propaganda covers the world in a fraction of a second. The separation of powers and the Americans' proclivity to drive democracy to its grotesque extremes have made the USA a difficult country to defend.

I doubt whether American democracy could survive in the

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vicinity of a powerful dictatorship. Yet, because the world has shrunk, America is now a direct neighbour of the Soviet system, even though the American people have so far refused to take in this drastic change in their geography.

IT SEEMS TO ME *that the Soviet élite find it difficult to make realistic judgments about US motives and US intentions. They cannot make sense of that vast and alien spectrum of factors that American policy-makers have to work with and work against. I'd dearly like to know whether the Soviet oligarchs laugh at us in their lighter moments, or whether they feel that we are in the business of hatching super-clever conspiracies to wipe them off the face of the earth.*

BUKOVSKY: They often laugh at the contortions and cluelessness of US policy. But they also believe that the farce has to be taken seriously because the plot has been specially laid on by the Americans to "pull a fast one" on the Soviet leadership. The men in the Kremlin are Marxist-Leninists. They believe in conspiracies. Until quite recently, they thought that the fumblings and failures of the US authorities were deliberate shows of incompetence to confuse the world, but that behind it all was hidden a clever, no-nonsense capitalist government, a kind of Comintern-in-reverse, which was pulling the strings and controlling the players. So the Soviet leaders were never quite sure whether the laugh was on the Americans or whether it was they, the Soviets, who were being taken to the cleaners.

—Our attribution of smartness to them is matched by their attribution of fiendishly clever policies to us. . . .

BUKOVSKY: Yes, it is. The Soviet leaders have to believe that "the capitalist enemy" is very cunning—or else, how come they haven't managed to eradicate it internally in all these years?

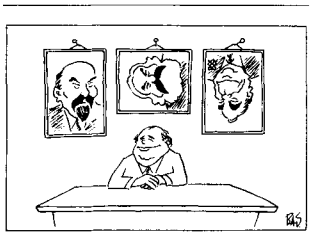
—It was remarkable, however, that at the time of the Watergate scandal the Kremlin showed no "Schadenfreude" and was keeping quiet about Nixon's tribulations. Two explanations have been offered. First, that Nixon had been the architect of détente, which the Soviet leaders were anxious not to damage. Second, that giving a blow-by-blow account, in American fashion, of the unravelling of the President's authority and his creeping impotence as chief executive might have had a copy-cat effect within the Soviet system: "Aha! So that's how one exposes a powerful man's abuses of authority. We have men infinitely more guilty than Richard Nixon!"

BUKOVSKY: I don't think our leaders held back on Watergate for that sort of reason. It was more important for them not to present the American side as weak or even weakening. In order to maintain its grip on the population, the Soviet system must show itself to be facing a powerful enemy.

If you suddenly display on the pages of *Pravda* the ineptitudes of the US government and the ignorance of American politicians—well, where is the big devil? If the Americans are so ham-fisted, why do we need all this expenditure on nuclear weapons? Why our vast standing army? Why the permanent mobilisation of Soviet society? Why the ubiquitous warning that "the enemy is listening"—when all the enemy is doing is squabbling and shooting himself in the foot? No, that wouldn't have done; so the Watergate affair was played down.

The myth of the big devil had to be kept going.

3. Revolution from Above



SOVIET MAN! *This is a hoary topic, but for me it has a continuing fascination because it is the key to the question "Is there such a thing as 'socialism' or 'communism' in the USSR?". You have said that the concept of Soviet Man was the starting-point for all the illegalities you experienced in your country.*

BUKOVSKY: The idea of Soviet Man is so diffuse that any ruler or any *KGB* officer can interpret it in any way that suits his purpose. Broadly speaking, it depicts a non-existent type of human being—one who "builds Communism", endorses the policies of the Party, fights for "Peace", and condemns the machinations of "Imperialism". This is the gross propaganda side of the concept. In practical life, however, more subtle use is made of it. You are blackmailed into saying whether you regard yourself as a Soviet Man; and if you don't, there's hell to pay.

—You write in your book:

> **"'You are a Soviet Man', says the KGB detective, 'and therefore obliged to help us'. And what can you say in reply? If you're not Soviet, what are you? Anti-Soviet? That alone is worth seven years in the labour camp and five in exile."**

The strange thing about the idea of Soviet Man is that it is not written into the Constitution any more than the role of the Party General-Secretary. (What, one may ask, is Mikhail Gorbachov doing in the Kremlin as General-Secretary, seeing that he is neither President nor Prime Minister?) Soviet Man is a purely ideological concept. In law you are a Soviet citizen, but you need not be a Soviet Man. One of the achievements of your Civil Rights group was to have made that distinction, and to have educated the legal sense of the citizen to a point where he would demand the enforcement of the letter of Soviet Law and the Soviet Constitution.

BUKOVSKY: Alik Volpin was the father of the idea in our circle that we should insist on a clear distinction being made between ideology and law. We said: Yes, there is such a thing, on paper at least, as a "Soviet citizen"—but there is no such thing as "Soviet Man". Despite the totalitarian nature of the system, the comrades could never quite translate ideology

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into legislation. Hypocrisy and the needs of propaganda always demanded that the penal code and jurisdiction should reflect certain civilised standards that the rest of the world would accept, no matter how consistently they were being violated in daily practice. They *looked* good to the Webbs and to the Lion Feuchtwangers, and that was of great propaganda value to the young dictatorship.

—And the double-talk worked. Harold J. Laski wrote these lapidary words about Andrei Vishinsky, Stalin's Public Prosecutor, after a visit to the Soviet Union in 1935:

> **"I was disposed to think of him essentially in his capacity as prosecutor. . . . I found him a man whose passion was law reform. . . . He was doing what an ideal Minister of Justice would do if we had such a person in Great Britain. . . ."**[5]

What you and your group did was to turn Soviet hypocrisy to good account, demanding not only that "sin should be paying tribute to virtue", but that some of the sinning should cease—a most daring undertaking.

BUKOVSKY: It was, and for a simple reason: if the Soviet Constitution and Soviet Law were to be strictly translated into reality, the system would collapse. Everyone knew that they were not meant to be taken seriously. Popular opinion accepted the farce and the double-think as the inescapable backdrop to the fiction of "socialism". We thought otherwise.

—How does a group of very young dissidents force the mighty totalitarian empire to respect its own laws and the Constitution?

BUKOVSKY: We did it by stages and (as I said) without any planning. Of course, we could not *force* the authorities to do what they were determined not to, but bit-by-bit we insinuated our way of legal thinking until it caught on and established itself as the natural method for voicing dissent.

Don't forget that in 1917 the Bolsheviks abolished legality and independent jurisdiction, ushering in that profound sense of official lawlessness and indeed barbarism that paraded for a long time under the name of "revolutionary justice". They assaulted the people's sense of religion and subverted all existing norms of morality. That was the barren land we had to sow on.

I am amazed to see, 25 years after our first efforts, that those little beginnings have now become the established way of protest. Whoever has a complaint or wants things changed will refer to the existing legal instruments and beat the public drums to draw attention to his demand. In other words, we have induced the authorities at least to *talk* the language of Law, and that is the first step to making them *respect* the Law. In an ideological system that is the only way in which an essentially lawless society can be slowly transformed into something resembling a normal society.

—Isn't that slow transformation now being boosted by Gorbachov's own insistence that "socialist legality" must be strictly observed?

BUKOVSKY: Yes it is, even though the pre-Gorbachov history of the enforcement of "socialist legality" does not give one a lot of hope for the future. Not only that, but look at the slogans Gorbachov is now using to open up Soviet society. *Glasnost* (openness)! Why, we used to go to jail for demanding it! Our very first demonstration in Pushkin Square in 1965 had one single slogan: "*Glasnost*", and now it is the General-Secretary of the Communist Party pinning it to his mast. The reason? Gorbachov is an intelligent man; he understands what the people want and how to muster support for himself. His interpretation of "openness" is not the one we demanded, but it is a step in the right direction.

WESTERN HISTORIANS and students of the Soviet scene have often noted that the sense of law, and of individual rights and civic courage, is weak in Russian society. Russian history and tradition are blamed for much of this weakness. Going by the amount of persuasion you had to use on your fellow prisoners to make them understand their legal rights, and the many complaints and appeals you wrote on their behalf, it would seem that you had direct experience of both the Soviet sense of legalised lawlessness and the ordinary Russian's isolation from the law. I tend to believe that even the elementary courage of saying "These are my rights, and I'll stick to them" will have to be implanted in the Russian people by some revolution from above, and it may well be that Gorbachov's reforms will promote that awareness as one of their perhaps unintended consequences.

BUKOVSKY: You're touching on a sore point. One question that tormented many of us in the dissident movement in the Soviet Union was the question of our national worth. Why was it that other countries were mature enough to attain and maintain democratic government and the Russians were not? Was there a consciousness of law and responsibility missing from the Russian psyche—a willingness to assert our rights as individuals? What explained our role as the greatest oppressor of nations in the world—our reputation as a universal trouble-maker?

Well, as long as I was inside the Soviet Union I found any number of cosy if self-accusatory explanations: the heritage of serfdom; the traditions of Czarism; the destruction of the law by the Bolsheviks; the mockery of jurisdiction under Stalin (the Show Trials); and so on.

But when I began to live in Western Europe and especially in the USA, my implied sense of guilt and inferiority as a Russian fell away. For what did I experience? I discovered that the ordinary Frenchman's and German's sense of law was every bit as tenuous as that of the ordinary Russian, and that in many ways the conformism of the Western citizen was more bovine and depressing than anything I experienced in the Soviet Union. I found conformism, timidity, and sheer ignorance especially sobering in the USA. Your law-

[5] Harold J. Laski, *Law and Politics in Soviet Russia* (1935), p.21.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conscious, individualistic, brave and upright Americans were conspicuous by their absence. Like the hedges and lawns around American homes, the average US citizen's mind seemed to be cut to a single basic pattern; and woe betide those who failed to conform.

All this induced me to rethink some of the received readings of the Russian character and to come to the conclusion that we would be no worse as citizens of a future liberal democracy than are members of other nations. Indeed, in some respects your Russian is more individualistic because he has a stubborn strain of anarchism in his blood. He hates authority and derives great pleasure from outflanking and defeating it. I doubt whether, in any competition for individualism and non-compliance, your dutiful German or American, with his impeccable record as a taxpayer, could hold his own against a true-blooded Russian.

ARE YOU *saying that a return to some form of Stalinism would prove impossible in the Soviet Union? If the Russians are as anarchistic as you say they are, both Lenin and Stalin might have had a piece of truth on their side when they insisted that "barbarism could only be defeated by barbarism". Mightn't, paradoxically, barbarism* à la *Lenin and Stalin—and, who knows,* à la *Gorbachov—be the first steps towards democracy in the unhappy context of Russian history and society?*

BUKOVSKY: Absolutely not. There can be no return to Stalinism in the Soviet Union. Chekist terror is a thing of the past.

—Even though there are no institutional guarantees against either?

BUKOVSKY: Yes, despite the lack of institutional guarantees. Even totalitarian systems go through stages of natural development and decline. The Soviet system has aged; it is rapidly declining. It couldn't muster the self-righteousness and ideological drive to install another reign of terror.

The backdrop to Stalinism was Civil War, two World Wars, and the fierce commitment of a fairly large number of Communists. That combination of factors cannot be repeated. Never again will the Soviet Union have Communist leaders with so profound a sense of ideological drive that they would, or could, terrorise the vast majority of the population.

—Mightn't the exigencies of a profound economic crisis force even relatively "liberal" leaders of the stamp of Gorbachov to impose order on the Soviet peoples—in the name of "perestroika" *and, ironically, "democracy"?*

So far we have bailed out the Soviet system every time it found itself in deep trouble. But what if we stopped doing so and said, as we might under present conditions: "Your economic weakness is greatly to our advantage. We'll do nothing to give you another breathing space"? Wouldn't the Soviet system have to revert to some form of Stalinism?

BUKOVSKY: First, I don't think for a moment that the West would or could exploit the economic crisis of the Soviet system in terms of a well thought-out and coordinated policy. It would probably pay "protection money" the way innocent and frightened people often do, given a tough enough extortioner. Secondly, economic hardship would certainly not induce the Kremlin to return to Stalinism. On the contrary, it would force it to move even further and faster towards a market economy than it is already doing. The *NEP* (New Economic Policy) of the early 1920s was the system's typical response to the crisis of the economy. It would respond in the same way now, as it is indeed doing.

—We should, then, let the Soviets stew in their own juice and not fear the incalculable reactions of a cornered system?

BUKOVSKY: That's right. In order to hasten liberalisation in the USSR and cause the Kremlin to take up a more peaceable posture towards the outside world, the pressure has to be kept up. It is already paying dividends. Gorbachov's spectacular climb-down on INF (Intermediate Nuclear Forces) could not have happened without it.

BUT TO RETURN TO "GLASNOST". *Could that slogan prove dangerous for the cohesion of Soviet society? Could it perhaps prove dangerous for Gorbachov himself?*

BUKOVSKY: It is, in my view, dangerous for the *system*. It is my deep conviction, and that of many of my friends, that the Soviet system cannot exist as an open society. You can open it up a bit to let off steam and to assist you in installing a new leadership—but then you have to close it down again or face the consequences. That Gorbachov has hijacked the slogan of *glasnost* from the dissidents shows that he has a keen sense of what has to be said and what he has to avoid saying in the critical situation he is now facing. But he also knows that "openness" cannot be implemented.

—Hasn't he gone beyond "glasnost", *though—demanding, in fact, reforms and a thorough reorganisation of society . . . which amount, in the Soviet context, to revolutionary transformation? Gorbachov does use the words "revolutionary transformation", referring not only to change in the economy but also to radical change in the behaviour of people and institutions.*

BUKOVSKY: Gorbachov first spoke exclusively about revolutionary change in the *economy*. It was only after the 27th Party Congress that he began to widen the term to include other areas of Soviet life; and his emphasis continues to be on economic reconstruction. It is the Soviet Union's economic backwardness that upsets Gorbachov most, because he sees it as a great hindrance to putting the Soviet empire on the map as an all-round superpower. One has to be extremely circumspect in using the word "revolution" in a Communist environment.

—I think Gorbachov is aware of that, yet he hasn't shied away

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from using the word "revolution" on a great many occasions and in a non-economic context. Addressing the Khabarovsk Party aktiv *on 31 July 1986, he said:*

> **"The current restructuring embraces not only the economic but all other facets of public life: social relations, the political system, the spiritual and ideological sphere and the style and the methods of the work of the Party and of all our cadres. Restructuring is a capacious word. I would equate the word restructuring with the word revolution. Our transformations, the reforms mapped out in the decisions of the plenum of the Party's Central Committee and of the 27th Party Congress, are a real revolution in the entire system of social relations, in the hearts and minds of people, in the psychology and understanding of the modern period and, first of all, of the tasks engendered by rapid scientific and technological progress."**

BUKOVSKY: Taking Gorbachov's various utterances as a whole, though, I would still insist that he is principally concerned with the economy. He is hoping that the reform of the economy can somehow be accomplished without everything else being reformed too, because "everything else" would mean unbuttoning the whole straitjacket of the Soviet system. That he does not want to do. In a subsequent passage of the speech from which you have just quoted, Gorbachov makes it very clear that the "revolution" he advocates must happen "not beyond the boundaries of socialism but within the framework of our system, revealing the potential of the planned economy, socialist democracy, culture and the human factor".

BUT EVEN IF Gorbachov did want to confine himself to the reform of the economy, he would still be Marxist enough to realise that you cannot do that without affecting the "superstructure"—your political life, your arts and letters, and so on. But Gorbachov has gone far beyond the notion of just economic "restructuring"; and even where he does not use the word "revolution", it is quite clear from the context that radical change in the economy and **beyond** *the economy is what he has in mind.*

For example, talking to workers of the Gagarin Aviation Works in Komsomolsk-on-Amur on 29 July 1986, he said:

> **"I can see that a lot of problems have accumulated here. As I listen to you I become even more convinced that everything we have started is correct. A great deal has been piled up, a great deal, and we need a large bulldozer to sweep it away."**

And later, answering complaints about enterprise management, he made some observations (to the applause of the workers) that are especially unlikely to make him popular with the "Nomenklatura":

> **"It's essential that the manager does not take the view that having been appointed to his post he's now a kind of apanage prince. . . . The people must know everything and keep a check on it, because the human factor is the most important one. . . . What kind of socialism is it if things are kept from the people? Is this some private concern of entrepreneurs? . . . We've taken the country thoroughly in hand. We have strength enough; we have character enough. No one is going to knock us off the track."**

These are, to my mind, pretty radical sentiments in an ossified Marxist-Leninist environment even if they don't herald the institutional reform of the system. They must be anathema to a great many people in the Establishment.

BUKOVSKY: What is so fascinating about the drama we can now observe unfolding under Gorbachov is that he and his supporters understand the crisis of the Soviet system in exclusively Marxist terms.

The Soviets have been building their society since 1917 according to the books, and the books have produced a diseased Marxist system. Now they are being forced to apply to it the critical apparatus of Marxism. This is ironic, because traditionally Marxism was harnessed to the understanding and then the destruction of slave-owning, feudal, and bourgeois societies in the hope of preparing the way for the consummation of history in a socialist and then communist world society.

Marx did not say what precisely would happen under a socialist system nor did he say whether or how his theory would apply under "socialism". All he said was that he was no "Marxist" and that it would be absurd to build a political party on Marxism. The rest was left open. Now that the world's first truly "scientific" Marxist society is in deep trouble, it remains to be seen how the tools of Marxism can help it to attain a measure of health.

—Whether Gorbachov is trying to do it exclusively by applying Marxism is not self-evident. Many would say that Gorbachov's—and Deng's—rescue-operations represent heavy borrowings from the market economy and capitalism: such as their insistence on the profitability of enterprises, competition, wage differentials, ownership by local cooperatives, and the like.

BUKOVSKY: Let's look at the way in which Gorbachov and his supporters define the crisis. They say, in true Marxist fashion, that a conflict has developed between "social relations" and "productive forces".

—In plain English, that the ruling class has a vested interest in keeping things as they are because upheavals in the economy would threaten their privileges. . . .

BUKOVSKY: Yes, that's the gist of it, but they put it differently, and that's what intrigues me. Tatyana Zaslavskaya, one of Gorbachov's principal advisers and gurus, has restated and re-emphasised Marx's point that a clash between "social relations" and "productive forces" leads to trouble, and unless the reorganisation of the existing system of productive forces is taken in hand, Soviet society will continue on its downward slide. But, she asks, how can such a reorganisation be "entrusted to social groups that occupy rather high

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

positions in the system and accordingly have a vested interest in its maintenance?" Her answer is: Never mind the vested interests—do it, because if you don't the clash will lead to social upheaval, turmoil, and even revolution.

Now, this is classical Marxism—suddenly applied to the ills of Soviet society. But she goes further and says that even a so-called "mature" socialist society is not exempt from this rule, and here we come to what I take to be Gorbachov's so far "hidden" agenda. Zaslavskaya asks: And what is the essence of a Marxist society? It is the public ownership of the means of production. She does not go much beyond putting the question, but I take it to be a hint heavy with meaning, for what the Gorbachov reformers are really driving at is some change in the ownership of the means of production. But that would be opening up Pandora's box, because we all know that the form of ownership established in the Soviet Union 70 years ago is "the dictatorship of the proletariat" which in turn means the dictatorship of "the advance-guard" of the proletariat, that is to say, of the Communist Party. Hence, in my judgment, the Gorbachov reforms point to a thorough reform of Enemy No. 1—the Communist Party bureaucracy itself; and they do so, as I say, strictly according to the letter of Marxist analysis.

—We are now talking about prediction, not facts. . . .

BUKOVSKY: We are, but I flatter myself I can read between the lines. Now, what kind of changes in ownership do the reformers foresee? They do not, of course, suggest that they would want to return the means of production to private hands or dissolve the Party (although they may mean both in their private thoughts). They simply imply that *some* change in the Communist ownership of the means of production must be put in train.

Remember that the Marxist definition of ownership (based on Roman law) is: owning, using, and managing. What do the reformers say? They say that Soviet society does not require that all three functions should be united in the hands of the Party—it is enough that the Party should have one or two, leaving the rest in the hands of "the public". This is truly amazing, for it foreshadows a wish to "restructure" Soviet society right from the bottom. The question is: Can an ossified, unfree society be made to be flexible and free? According to the Marxist tenets, it can. Gorbachov's people argue that in ancient societies slave labour was abolished when it ceased to be competitive. By a similar token, the present methods of "socialist" production are inefficient and must give way to more cost-effective ways of production. And if vested interests ("social relations") stand in the way, it's too bad for the vested interests.

WE CAN SEE WHY Gorbachov is having a bumpy ride. The question of returning state property to "private" hands is, in fact, now being openly raised in the Soviet Union. The official excuse for raising it is the debate on the new law concerning the future of State enterprises, and more particularly the proposed issue of shares as part of the process of conferring financial autonomy on them. In one television discussion (Moscow TV, 10 March 1987), a viewer's suggestion that the devolution of control should lead to some form of private ownership was strongly rejected by Evald Figurnov, head of one of the economic departments of the Central Committee. But the manner in which the question had been raised and was turned down is intriguing because it indicates that "glasnost" *is now inducing people to think—and to say—the unthinkable. Figurnov said:*

> **"[The question] presupposes that the introduction of complete financial autonomy would lead to a transition from the property of the whole people, I should say, to that of a cooperative, or even of a private person, since everyone would have shares, or bonds, something that would represent one's personal, private property, wouldn't it? Well, I should like to emphasise that no such transformation of the property of the whole people into cooperative property, and much less into private property, will take place once the Law on the State Enterprise comes into force. Not at all. That is to say, the property of the whole people, in accordance with the tenets of the economic theory and political economy of socialism, will remain the same property of the whole people . . . there is not going to be private property here."**

BUKOVSKY: What fascinates me is the reformers' almost comical determination to stick to the framework and language of Marxism, never mind what they might really think. The *muzhik* is being encouraged to rent cattle. *Rent* cattle! The peasant family is given the option of renting a cow. Why this particular "reform"? Because renting a cow is not ownership; the peasant can exercise some of the ownership functions of having a cow—it can milk her and sell her products, but cannot *own* her. But even this "radical" innovation has failed to induce enthusiasm among the farmers for better production, and the reason for that brings me to another important point: you cannot reform the Soviet economy in a political vacuum.

—Which Gorbachov seems to be aware of. None of us can teach him about public relations and propaganda.

BUKOVSKY: Personally, he may be aware of it, but the people he has to work with aren't. It is, you see, not enough to offer the *muzhik* the cow he is milking. You cannot inject elements of a market economy into a Communist economy with any hope of success if you haven't obtained public backing for what you are trying to do. In a command economy you don't need public confidence—you just command. But the moment you offer the peasant the use of a cow you are asking for his initiative, for good husbandry, efficient marketing, and the like; and these he is not going to give unless he trusts you and your reforms. Renting of cattle has been a failure.

—But private plots are now being made more easily available, and the long-term "socialist leasing of land", as it is now euphemistically called, is about to be introduced for work-teams and even family units of not more than two or three

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people. If we go by the Hungarian examples, couldn't these reforms help to fill Soviet shops and markets with some of the items that are in chronically short supply?

BUKOVSKY: The Soviet peasants' mentality differs from that in Hungary. They don't take to private plots or work them the way the Hungarians do. For 70 years neither the Soviet élite nor the farming population or the working class was allowed to have any experience of running anything remotely like a market economy. No one in the USSR knows how a market economy operates. Cost-effectiveness, profitability, marketing, quality control, and the like, are ideas that will have to be acquired through trial-and-error over a long period of time. "Profit" was a boo-word in the Communist vocabulary. Can you make it respectable overnight?

—Your diagnosis chimes in perfectly with what Gorbachov's men themselves now take to be the ills of the Soviet economy. As Academician Abel Aganbegyan (talking on Hungarian television, 4 March 1987) observed:

> **"You have got used [in the Soviet State Planning Committee] to issuing direct instructions to the enterprises on what they should produce and how much. This method will now disappear and it is said that you should go over to economic regulators. However, in reality you do not even know what they are, you have never come across this method. Thus you might feel that there is no longer firm ground under your feet. After all, you have worked in the accustomed way for decades. . . . They [the conservative managers] are afraid of independence, yes, they are afraid of being independent. What is more, if they are given independence, they fail to make use of it. They continue to ask permission to do this or that, even though they do not need permission any more."**

WHAT IS *remarkable about this statement is that Aganbegyan should have been quite so open about the exasperation which Gorbachov's policies are causing among Soviet managers, and that his critique should be quite so close to the views held by "antagonistic" observers such as yourself. Perhaps there is, after all, life left in the Soviet economy?*

BUKOVSKY: To answer that comment, let me go on telling you how unfamiliarity with the facts of life in a non-command economy, together with pussy-footing piecemeal reform, can defeat the objectives of the reformers.

In the mid-1970s Brezhnev wanted to revitalise agriculture in the non-black-soil areas of Central Russia, where production had been poor. He came up with the revolutionary idea that people would produce more if they were paid more. Great investments followed; many millions were harnessed to the hope that "more pay will produce better results"—not in itself an irrational proposition in a market economy. But what really happened was that production actually declined in proportion to investment.

Why? Because the moment your farm worker was paid higher rates on the collective farm, he began to reduce the work he put into his private plot, on the simple principle that there was very little to buy in Soviet shops, hence you could only use a limited amount of money. Once you earned enough to buy what you needed—and what was available—you had done enough.

What I'm saying is that a basically sound economic idea can misfire if applied in an uncongenial environment. Partial reform is going to prove very difficult in the Soviet system. You'll have to open up the whole of the economy or face the prospect of repeating the Brezhnev experience and on a much larger scale.

MIKHAIL GORBACHOV'S REFORMISM *recently involved him in some revealing articulations about the way in which he envisages "democracy" operating in a revamped Soviet society. He suggested on more than one occasion that since the Soviet Union does not cater for "opposition parties" (and thus for reliable feedback), the Party itself would have to provide a wide spectrum of critical opinions. For example, talking to Soviet writers (on 19 June 1986), he said that the restructuring of society was made more difficult by the absence of a loyal opposition.*

> **"We don't have an opposition. How then can we monitor ourselves? Only through criticism and self-criticism. And most of all through *glasnost*."**

This may strike us as a feeble remedy, especially as Soviet history is replete with enthusiastic calls for "criticism and self-criticism", none of which prevented the Soviet economy and the political system from ending up in its present crisis. Nevertheless, the fact that Gorbachov has had the courage to mention the need of an "opposition" shows that this entirely Soviet man has a realistic understanding of where the shoe pinches and what sort of footwear he would buy himself if he could start all over again.

Commenting recently to a television audience about the poor quality of Soviet industrial products, Gorbachov said:

> **"Only socialism could have tolerated these for so long; they would have bankrupted capitalism."**

That his real meaning was "A market economy would never have permitted the production of such shoddy goods" cannot have been lost on his listeners.

BUKOVSKY: Gorbachov has his ear to the ground and picks up a lot of popular wisdom. In the 1960s I travelled extensively in the USSR and used to run into the kind of sentiments Gorbachov is now voicing. "We have no opposition parties and no private ownership—is it any wonder that our state-run industries are mismanaged and public property is pilfered?", I used to be told. "Of course, under a master *(khozyain)*, under a good owner, such things would not happen."

The curious thing was that the people who talked like that had, for the most part, never set eyes on a "master" or "owner". But they had had it handed down from their parents, and perhaps knew in their bones that the "master" of

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a peasant household was the kind of fellow you could trust. All this is common wisdom in the Soviet Union; people will talk like that at the drop of a hat. The "good master" is what people in the Soviet Union widely feel is lacking in Soviet society, and Gorbachov seems to be sharing that view.

—*A heritage from the* ancien régime*? From the Bible?*

BUKOVSKY: It may be a bit of both, but it's predominantly ordinary peasant wisdom and common sense. You have a very similar phenomenon in England. Council houses will be poorly looked after; but the same council houses sold to the tenants will at once take on a different appearance. Ownership stimulates pride; self-interest demands that you maintain and improve what you've got.

I once saw an amazing spectacle in Siberia. A gang of young fellows was planting rotten potatoes.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "Those potatoes are dead, they will never grow."

They laughed. "We're not paid to grow them, we're paid to plant them." But then they added: "Of course, none of this would be happening under a 'master'; he wouldn't allow it. But now—there is no ownership; nothing belongs to anybody. . . ."

That's the key to the malaise of the Soviet system.

(A concluding instalment will follow)

We Who have no Country

Many nights ago
our garden would not wait for morning
and we, until two, then three, turned over
strange entrances to earth.
Uncovering a new history
we chose only the finest shards of pottery—
copper-lustre, swan-necked vases,
burnt red amphoras,
their Greeks at games and war.
Through that night our spades split dirt
and aqua-painted seas rose
shimmering into our soiled

hands. Silently eras cast
out of their tombs
plates imprinted with vague spines,
vertebrae curled into bedrock, fossilised sleep,
now exposed to sharp oxygen, the stab of our warm breath.
Broken cities come into view,
cracked teacups and fragments of porcelain flesh,
a startled eye
discovering small continents,
capitals sunken from sight,
where we might have dwelled and slept,
where iron, all the flashing minerals,
breathe in the lap of the deep

earth. Stars disappeared.
Black velvet settled over our shoulders.
You lifted great grey boulders up
from the crumbling cloak of soil
and proudly rolled them down to the corner
like statues fresh from the chisel.
Another city slowly unfolds.
Its dark monuments lean
through my empty window screen;
their cracks and grooves I once
could read now speak a foreign tongue,
some ancient looped calligraphy,
a cipher maddening and haunting
each time I try to read your face

again, and below again
all history, inch-by-inch,
is burrowing out,
compelling and beautiful
because it is gone.

Eva Salzman

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Matthew Francis

Green Winter

IT IS DARK when the guards come to wake me. For a moment, I imagine that I am back home, and that some catastrophe has taken place, a fire, perhaps, or a burglary, but then I remember and swear at them. Yuri grins and says, "Come with us. The Chairman has visitors."

Outside, the stars have already faded, and the only light comes from a few scraps of muddy snow. The white winter is over and the green winter is beginning; it has been thawing for a week now, and I tread carefully to avoid the deep, slushy puddles which are scattered everywhere, colder than snow itself. I must be still half-asleep, because a line of English poetry suddenly appears in my head:

Woken in the pre-dawn by my guards. . . .

Where does it come from? Have I read it somewhere?

The Chairman smiles, just like Yuri, and says, "Come in, come in, please take a seat. A cold morning for the time of year, isn't it?"

"It isn't morning", I tell him sullenly.

It is warm in the office. There is a charcoal stove, a big one, and an electric light, though without a shade. To make it look more like an office and less like a caretaker's hut, there is a desk with a typewriter on it, and one of those wire in-trays you see in Moscow offices. I am not deceived, however. Tigran Vartanovitch is not in favour. Zhelatsk is not one of those modern camps they have further west, with space for 5,000 prisoners, closed-circuit television, and central heating in the guards' quarters. It is the true end of the world, *ultima Thule*. The Chairman must have said the wrong thing at a cocktail party, or perhaps he was at the wrong cocktail party altogether.

I am given a cup of coffee, which scalds my palate and tastes, enigmatically, of paraffin, but for which I am grateful. The Chairman introduces me to his visitors, a tall, athletic, bald man from Budapest (Dr Koshka) and a small, crumpled, bald man from Moscow (Dr Simagin). Koshka, the Hungarian, is an eminent parapsychologist, and Simagin a representative of the Supreme Committee for the Advancement of Soviet Science—in other words, I assume, some sort of policeman, even if an inductive rather than a deductive one. They ask me a number of questions about what they refer to as my "powers".

"I have no powers", I tell them impatiently.

I have no powers. When it comes to clairvoyance, I am just as likely to be spectacularly wrong as spectacularly right. If I had powers, after all, I would be making a fortune in black-market beef carcasses or selling secrets to the Americans instead of languishing in this desolate place, this Thule, the period of cosmography, the blank zone on the map. Unfortunately, I cannot control the visions that come to me when I lie in my hut at night, any more than I can control the cold or the darkness. Knowledge is only power if it is knowledge that somebody wants, and mine is not. Sometimes I wonder if even I want it.

Recently, my visions have been of a man of about forty, handsome in a craggy way, an Englishman, a poet. Sometimes I see him in bed with a blonde, frail woman, the wife of his publisher. (He addresses her as Ro, a curious syllable which might be the Greek letter or the English word for fish eggs.) They argue frequently about literary awards, about travel grants he might get to go to Iceland or America, about a man called Simpkins of whom the poet is jealous. At other times, I see him in village halls, or in cold, varnish-scented seminar rooms, reading impassioned descriptions of his childhood to sparse audiences of uncomfortable and adoring females. Sometimes again, he is doing something mundane, like going to the lavatory or buying razor blades, but I see him with such vividness that I *am* the poet, I smell the soap or see the sunlight fall across the foreign money in the till. I am not myself. It is my only distinction that I am not always myself.

IT IS TYPICAL OF my unevenness that, although the visitors are obviously interested in my spiritual, not my family life, my famous intuition at once leads me to believe that something has happened to Yelyena. Either she has received permission to go into exile—I mean the real kind, external exile—or she has been arrested, or she is dead. Dead—I am sure it is the latter. I do not know whether a political death or whether she has just died of something, but the voice has spoken.

On the contrary, Simagin tells me I am to be asked to take part in an experiment in the interests of the health and happiness of the Soviet people. For me, it will mean a transfer to Moscow, visits from Yelyena and

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the children, an end to the hard labour which is ruining my health. Dr Koshka, who is the Professor of Parapsychology at Moscow State Technical College, has assembled more than a hundred gifted psychics for the experiment, which involves, Simagin implies, our national security. Of course, what I learn in this hut is to go no further.

Simagin now becomes rhetorical and refers to great leaps that are being made in the name of Soviet science by beings whom he does not further define. Then Koshka takes over, and asks for the light to be extinguished so that he can show a film. The Chairman, excitingly, dismisses the guards, and a white, flickering square, a Thule, is projected on to the wall as Koshka struggles with the film. Now he has it. A luminous countdown flashes past: *10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1*. The film begins.

Scene One. Koshka, three or four years younger, walks down a Moscow street with a large red question mark poised over his head.

VOICEOVER: Have you ever wished you could do something with the unused parts of the brain?

Close-up of puzzled frown behind Koshka's horn-rimmed spectacles. Cut to:

Scene Two. Very dingy studio set intended to represent a laboratory. Two Soviet scientists, identified as such by white coats and Order of Lenin round neck, are pouring frothing liquid into test-tubes.

VOICEOVER: Soviet scientists have been labouring night and day to liberate the full power of the brain for the sake of science, socialism, and the advancement of humanity.

Cut to:

Scene Three. Old black-and-white film of Egyptian desert, clearly from pirated travelogue.

VOICEOVER: This is a pyramid.

"What was that about pyramids?" I ask, as someone behind me scrabbles to find the light switch. The bulb explodes metaphorically above my head, and the Chairman, ignoring my question, says, "I hope you found that interesting."

"But it's only just started."

"What do you mean?" the Chairman demands, but Koshka squats in front of my chair and peers curiously into my eyes.

"What was the last scene you remember?" he asks. The question is so simple that I have a horrible feeling there must be a catch in it, but I reply anyway.

"The pyramids."

"You've been asleep!" the Chairman says indignantly.

"Is that so?" Koshka asks. "Have you been asleep?"

"No. Yes. No, not asleep."

"Not asleep? Absent, perhaps?"

"Yes", I reply, "absent."

400

* THE NEXT issue of ENCOUNTER, out on 20 November, will be our 400th number. To celebrate the occasion we are publishing a special issue. On the cover is a new painting by Howard Hodgkin, and there will be contributions by George Steiner, Peter Jenkins, Milovan Djilas, Edward Shils, Leszek Kolakowski, Malcolm Bradbury, Thomas Sowell, John Weightman, Elizabeth Jennings, D. J. Enright, Marghanita Laski, Christopher Tugendhat, Daniel Bell, Gillian Tindall, Jack Curtis. . . . This will certainly be one of the most sought-after issues we have published—and in time, as with previous anniversary numbers, may well become a collector's item.

* ALTHOUGH WE are printing more copies than ever before, the 400th number is quite likely to sell out (as several recent issues have) soon after publication. If you are not already receiving ENCOUNTER regularly, please place an order right away.

In case of difficulty send £1.50 ($3.50) for each copy to:

ENCOUNTER, 44 GREAT WINDMILL STREET, LONDON W1V 7PA

400

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AFTER ALL, it is not easy to live in a mosaic. If Koshka had not squatted in front of my chair and searched my eyes as he did, I would not know myself why I missed the film. It is like clambering out of a dream and then, when you finally emerge, being unable to remember whether you had the dream last night or the night before, or whether it was a dream at all. There are only the little coloured stones to be fitted in somewhere.

For most of the film, I now realise, I was in England with the poet, who was in bed with a woman—his own wife, this time, rather than someone else's. Her name is Tess, and she differs from his other monosyllabic lover in almost every respect. Where Ro is blonde, Tess is dark. Where Ro has bony shoulders, Tess, from what I have been able to see of her above the duvet, is rather buxom. But her post-coital temper is just as fierce as Ro's. (It is a disappointment to me that I always seem to arrive in my other existence just after the fun has stopped and end up doing the agonising instead of the ecstasising.) Tess was reproaching me for my infidelity, which she claimed was very immature. I defended myself on the grounds that Ro is better placed than almost anybody in England to advance my career. In bed, she is a *femme de lettres* in her own right. She has had sex with all sixteen members, male and female, of the Firm, the group of poets who run the literary scene from their country houses in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, and thus has the power to cause domestic disharmony on a Parnassian scale. Poets are nothing if not domestic animals.

My English self, of course, is no exception to this rule, but he is not afraid that Tess will leave him. She is proud of his status as the leading poet of his generation and the likely next member of the Firm. The blood of Shakespeare and Milton flows in his veins, as she sees it, and, indeed, she is probably right. In any case, the poet talked so convincingly about his power over Ro and Ro's power over the English literary world that she finally fell asleep with a glow of enthusiasm suffusing her as far down as the sternum. The poet, however—or was it me by this time?—was not so sure. But then poets never are.

THE PHOTOGRAPH which Koshka hands me is of a grey-haired man, smiling in an eminent way as if discreetly attempting to show off his gold fillings.

"Do you know this man?" Koshka asks. I shake my head.

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"You would not like to guess his name? His nationality? Anything about him?"

"No."

Koshka seems disappointed. He runs his hand over his scalp and begins to pace up and down.

"I am sorry you missed my film", he says eventually. "I would show it again, but it will be dawn soon, and the curtains here would probably not be adequate to keep out the light. Never mind. Let me tell you something about myself."

He continues walking very rapidly, more like a man on a military training exercise than one struggling with a train of thought. He explains that the film showed how he, Koshka, had had a mysterious vision of the shooting of a certain President in a foreign country, how he reported it to his local Party and was ridiculed, and how the President was, in fact, assassinated several months later. How Koshka always remembered afterwards exactly where he was when he heard the news (in Dnyepopetrovsk Railway Station, returning from an International Conference on the Psychopathology of Dissidence). How he took the next train to Moscow instead of going home, and went straight to the offices of the Supreme Committee, where he explained what had happened, and how he was, after the necessary checks had been made, offered the Chair of Parapsychology, the first of its kind in the history of Soviet further education. How he conducted experiments in levitation, teleportation, telepathy and clairvoyance. Finally, the film showed his major finding, that a large number of gifted individuals concentrating their psychic forces on a single target could produce extraordinary effects, both physical and psychological.

Koshka stops his pacing and directs my attention to the photograph again.

"Suppose such a man were the target", he says.

"Who is he?"

"Suppose he were the Ambassador of a foreign power hostile to the Soviet Union."

"Yes?"

"Suppose, then, that more than a hundred of the most gifted psychics in the country were gathered together in one place—Moscow State Technical College, for the sake of argument—and that they knew a great deal about the man. They might have done some research, and found out that he had a mistress back home in Wisconsin (or wherever he came from) to whom he still wrote occasionally; that as a boy he was sickly and suffered from rheumatic fever; that he once dreamed of being a professional basketball player but was not tall enough; that his mother was dying of Parkinson's disease; that the food he missed most in his present posting was corned beef. You understand the kind of information I mean?"

"I think so."

"The kind it takes to know a man thoroughly. Suppose these gifted individuals knew such a man in this way, and that they used their knowledge against him. Suppose they concentrated on him for an hour a day, trying to influence him, to change his behaviour. What do you think would happen?"

"I don't know."

"Might he make a mistake? Perhaps send a letter to his President full of erroneous information?"

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I don't know."

"Alternatively, might he walk into the nearest police station and ask for political asylum?"

"I don't know."

"Finally, might he not fall unexpectedly ill? Have a stroke, or suffer from hallucinations?"

"I don't know. How do you expect me to know?"

"I don't expect it", Koshka replies, smiling. "We don't know, either."

A STUDY. I know it is a study although I have never been in one before. Through a small window opposite the door, I can see some typical English scenery of a green variety, downland or heath or moorland—I am not familiar with the technical vocabulary. There is a single bed, suitable for throwing oneself upon when worn out by the act of creation, and also a desk, brilliant and significant in the disc of light thrown by an anglepoise lamp (even though it is daylight beyond the window). The walls are heavy with books. A man of about forty, handsome in a craggy way, is sitting at the desk writing a poem:

Woken in the pre-dawn by my guards. . . .

It is to be a political poem, a protest against the injustice of the Soviet system. It will be thick with authentic detail, black bread, small green fish eaten whole, tattered cloths bound round the feet instead of shoes. It will be tense with a reticent British courage, and it will win a major poetry competition because of its realism and political awareness:

. . . I ask nothing
But time to dream of my childhood,
The odour of crushed blackberries,
Sausage and soap and forgotten love affairs.
But there is not very much time. Dawn is breaking.

DAWN IS BREAKING as I explain to Dr Koshka and Dr Simagin that I am obliged to refuse their offer. The reason I give is not political or even moral. I explain that I am an individualist and do not think I could work well with other psychics, that the substance inside me doesn't appear to mix. Also that, as I remarked earlier, my faculties are passive ones and I have never influenced anybody to do anything in my life. It may be so, of course. The thought crosses my mind that I have perhaps influenced an English poet whose name I still do not know to write a poem about me that would never otherwise have been written. An alternative and more uncomfortable thought is that I may, in fact, have no objective existence outside his poem, and that this may explain my refusal to act in my own best interests—a common failing of fictional characters.

Koshka seems neither angry nor disappointed. He has, after all, more than a hundred psychics for his experiment. The guards are summoned again to take me to breakfast. As we leave the hut, a small, remote sun is shining, and the icy green of the surrounding fields looks suddenly foreign.

Pumping The Organ

When our voices, caught between tides,
Could find no safe haven,
We were allowed to pump the organ.

Closeted in the vestry, snug as moths
Among the spare cassocks and surplices,
We watched the bellows' pointer rise
As we wrestled with the heavy wooden bar.

Sometimes we dozed or forgot, the gauge
Plummeted and the great gale above wheezed
To a rude gasp. Then Mr Whaller, our
Plumber-organist, would bang on the panels
With his calloused hands and noisily,
In panic, we restored the breath of God.

My voice never did find a sure harbour
And though organs thunder they're inspired
By the one silent, invisible usurper with
No attendant clumsy hands that serve.

R. N. Allan

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vernon Scannell

Sentences

(Soldiers serving sentences in Military Prisons and Detention Barracks are officially referred to and addressed as S.U.S.'s—Soldiers Under Sentence)

Who spiked the water at the wedding
Held in the Sergeants' Mess?
We all know who the fellow was:
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who blew reveille in the dead man's ear,
Made him get up and dress?
It wasn't the Company Bugler, but
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who fed the whole battalion
On one man's rations? Guess!
Of course you know; it could only be
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who marched acros the sea, his boots
Bright and dry? Why, yes!
The smartest man in the Regiment:
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who made the tempest halt, ground arms
And stand at ease, no less?
The man who knew the word of command—
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who rode a donkey into town
And cried in his distress?
We don't know why, but we know who:
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who chased the Pay Corps scroungers from
The place of holiness;
Bashed spuds on Sunday? Who but he,
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who woke the Colonel's daughter from
Death's sleep to wakefulness?
Not Sawbones but the miracle lad
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who ripped night's bandage from the eyes
And healed men's sightlessness?
It wasn't the M.O.'s Orderly but
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who never wore a pip or stripe
Yet still achieved success?
Who held the lowest rank of all?
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

Who got beat up by Itie cops
To force him to confess?
Who got put on a Two-five-two?
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

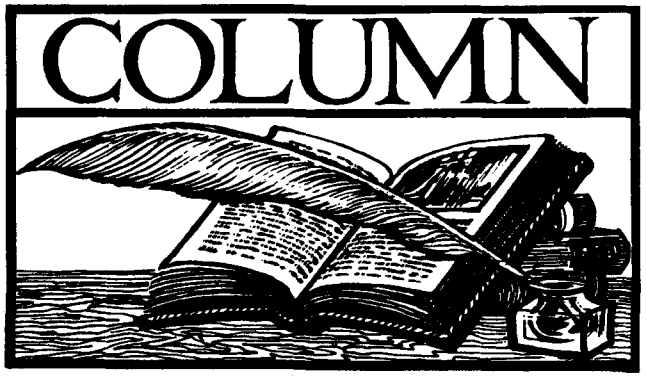
Who took the Redcaps fists and boots,
His face a bloody mess
And then got taken out to die?
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

But

Who swallowed wine and pissed out water
Couldn't wake up when reveille was blown,
Who screwed Colonel Jairus's daughter,
Ate ten men's rations, all on his own,
Robbed the blind and beat up cripples,
Flogged his donkey right to the bone?

Johnny Evans, he was the fellow,
Ended up high against the bloodshot sky
Johnny Evans, the barrack-room cowboy,
Arms stretched out like a P.T.I.
He, and another old Janker-wallah,
One each side of the man who cried
A loud reproach to his stone-deaf father
And promised Johnny, before he died,
A place that night in the Officer's Mess,
He, Johnny Evans, was a Soldier Under Sentence
Jay . . .
E . . .
S.U.S!

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Hollywood: The Dream Factory was a book published in 1950 by the splendidly named Hortense Powdermaker. It certainly pulverised its subject. But I've always had doubts about the title. Can dreams be manufactured? My recent experience suggests not.

For the past year or so I've returned to the humble trade of film reviewing—first to help out as a locum, latterly because of growing addiction to the large screen. I know a distinguished film critic whose idea of Nirvana is one movie after another—a perpetual version of the Cannes Film Festival, an ordeal he actually enjoys. My own drug dependence is not quite so advanced; but I still look forward every week to Mondays and Tuesdays, when I join my colleagues at one or other of the capital's preview theatres. It's a bizarre experience. Some of the smaller establishments look and smell like my idea of a seedy French brothel—worn stair-carpet, a whiff of stale hair-oil, lubricious coloured lighting in the half-dark. And the colleagues! A German professor I used to know was fond of quoting an academic joke. God decided, it ran, to create the perfect being: He hit upon the university professor. The Devil, not to be outdone, had his revenge: his invention was—the colleague.

Well, my movie colleagues aren't diabolical; but they are a strange collection. A stray observer might mistake them for an outing from some public institution—a middle-aged people's home, say, or a mild insane asylum. And no wonder. Many of the films we see are enough to drive us mad.

They fall, or slump, into a number of set categories. Commonest of all, at the moment, are the cop movies. Why such an obsession with the guardians of law and order? Deep-seated fears, no doubt, at the level of violence in "our society". But while the happy endings, often as bloody as the last act of *Hamlet*, may provide reassurance on the lines of W. H. Auden's "guilty vicarage", purging society by expelling the unmasked criminal in a conventional detective story, the whole tone of these US police films blurs any distinction between innocence and guilt. The cops are as lethal as the baddies. True, they enjoy buddy-buddy joshing with their partners in crime-fighting; true, they may face a corrupt mayor or DA; true, most such pictures end with the heroes and heroines concocting some ghastly meal of hamburgers and relish. But they usually shoot to kill, not capture. Why? In movie convention, because shyster lawyers will quibble, delay, or plea-bargain to get the villains freed. Where the courts shirk dispensing justice, the justiciar wreaks revenge.

Rambo and its like, with climactic blazing gun-battles, are only a variant on this theme; but there are other familiar plots as conventional as Noh plays. One current favourite has been nicknamed "the yuppie nightmare". In this, a rising young "executive", usually unmarried, falls into the clutches of a lustful, scatty vamp. Delighted and terrified, he endangers his job and his family prospects; sometimes, his suburban home is wrecked. This, clearly, expresses respectable people's resentment of tame routines and purposeless, modest prosperity: it also echoes the old dichotomy between sacred and profane love. Spiced by spurious feminism—the male adolescent's glee at finding women who actually want sex—it also hints at middle-aged male exhaustion in the face of sexual demands. But most such movies flunk the test of reality. They land the hero safely back in his giant corporation, or else leave him happy (and far from destitute) in some cute and sensual bohemia. Real squalor, poverty, deep incompatibility—these, as dénouements, are rare. The yuppie nightmare, in most cases, is wish-fulfilment, not dream.

Far closer to dreams, in the cinema, are some of the Gothic horror stories. "Gothic"—or "Gothick"—is indeed the word. Most of the elements in these grisly tales derive from the Romantic era; what's new is the special-effects technology. And horror movies are no less conventional than cop films and yuppie nightmares. Often, they involve children who break parental taboos. Left alone in the house, the "kids" explore the crater left by a fallen tree, or examine some ancient book, or enact a sacred ritual. Graves open; the dead walk; monsters materialise. The monsters repay study. Some commentators believe that they're based on folk-memories of dinosaurs, pterodactyls, and other prehistoric creatures—though these did badly in the Darwinian struggle to survive. My own guess is that spiders, lobsters, beetles, and fish supply most of the hair-raising features: long, jointed, spindly legs, hard shells and antennae, a scuttling motion, and rows of sharp concealed teeth. Essentially, this is species-phobia; but it sometimes has "racial" elements too. One of the most distasteful aspects of some recent horror movies has been the resemblance—conceivably unintended—between zombies and Zulus. "Alien" is an expression that the late (and much loved) George Mikes sadly failed to domesticate. It still figures as a fright-word in film terminology—as does that poor old noun "cenobite". The last horror film I saw attached this label to a sinister bunch of ashen-fleshed demons from the underworld—as who might say "The Cistercians will get you if you don't watch out".

Solecisms aside, what makes these movies dreamlike is their iconography rather than their plots. Plastic slime is one great standby. Monsters emerge from mucus like babies being born; blood is sticky; flesh rubs off like rotten meat. And supernatural events are announced not only by sub-Wagnerian music, but by rushing winds. Human beings are sucked into vortices. Powerlessness rules.

There are few people more boring, I know, than those who recount their dreams. I'll merely point out, therefore, that these horror-movie effects are common in mine. The earliest I remember, from kindergarten days, was of being condemned to beheading for piracy, and shamelessly pleading to

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be let off. The most recent had me in a berserk elevator at a Hilton hotel: each time I hit the button for the lobby, we shot up to the roof. Castration fear, cowardice, ambition, and impotence: *these* are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little nocturnal life is rounded by a scream.

That, I think, is what makes most literary dreams appear so unsatisfactory. The best dream story I know is by the now largely forgotten "A. J. Alan", one of the BBC's earliest spellbinding raconteurs. He was a mysterious figure. Legend has it that he used to broadcast in a dinner-jacket, with his script pasted on thick cardboard to prevent rustling, and a lighted candle to read by, in case the lamps went out. He sounded as if he were simply talking extempore; and his stories still read casually and well. Few of them were recorded: I've heard only one. Nowadays, his voice sounds slightly affected—high-pitched, with a prissy, genteel accent; but then so do many British middle-class speakers from the 1920s and 1930s. "Alan" admitted to being a civil servant. In fact, he was one of the Government's electronic surveillance agents—forerunners of GCHQ's listening spooks—and his real name was Leslie Lambert.

His story "The Dream" describes a recurring nightmare which he claimed to have had since childhood. He's entering a house in the West End of London, and he's late. Up a noble staircase, he's ushered into a crowded room. Near the door, men in evening clothes are standing; further in, they're sitting on small gilt chairs, haphazardly arranged. From dream to dream, they seem to have moved forward. At the far end of the room is a dais or platform. On it sits the only woman in the room, with a man on another chair. Each time, the man is a different person. He seems to be answering the woman's questions, but it's too far away to hear what's being said. Sometimes, when he dreams the dream, "Alan" has recognised one of the people in front of him; twice, it's been the man on the platform. Each time, next morning, that person has died in the night. So, although sometimes a chair falls vacant, "Alan" never takes it, but hangs back near the door.

He admitted, when telling the story, that "The Dream" was implausible. To offset it, he offered a "real", less logical nightmare—something about riding a bicycle among and over boulders. That seemed to me less likely still. I had much the same impression with some of the dreams collected in Guido Almansi's and Claude Béguin's anthology, *Theatre of Sleep*.[1] Extensive as it is, this omits "A. J. Alan"; but its editors' comments apply equally to him. "A literary dream", they concede, "is an artificial document since it is manipulated by the writer according to the rules of rhetoric and narrative strategy." They go on to argue that these are the rules we all obey when we recount our dreams—which is perhaps why most of our narratives are so tedious, compared with the dream experience.

Not that all the plays in this *Theatre* are thus flawed. The better the writer, the better the account of the dream. Apollinaire, Ambrose Bierce, Borges, Italo Calvino, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Goethe, Peter Handke, Leopardi, Pushkin, Shakespeare—such, unsurprisingly, are the late joys of this season in the subconscious. Few British writers are represented, and of those fewer still make my short-list. Perhaps the national temperament is too classical and cool.

Yet a British writer, Eric Rhode, has recently produced one of the deepest and most sensitive studies I've yet read concerning this whole shadowy region. Entitled *On Birth and Madness*,[2] it focuses initially on the traumas associated with the birth of a child or sibling. But although a slow and reflective book, as much a stimulus to meditation as any patient Biblical text, Rhode's work is not addressed merely to psychoanalytic specialists. It should interest anyone seriously concerned with literature, philosophy, religion, and the mysteries of ordinary life.

Let me declare an interest by confessing that the author is a friend. When I first met him, he was a critic and historian of the arts, and especially the cinema. I was astonished—but should not have been—when he decided to become a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, qualifying at the Tavistock Clinic, and working for the National Health Service, notably with children at Paddington Green, before entering private practice. Meanwhile, he married and fathered a lively family.

His interests, in other words, are wide and his experience is considerable. *On Birth and Madness* brings them together in profound synthesis. Freud, Shakespeare, Cézanne, Descartes—the great explorers are canvassed alongside anonymous patients and what looks like Rhode's observation of his own children and himself. Nor are the artists reduced, as so often by clinical experts, to case-studies or caricatures. "Often when reading Kafka", writes Rhode, "our first and wrong impression is that the author has given himself over to dramatising a psychopathology." But "by a twist in perspective, neurotic destructiveness becomes religious insight".

The book's central point is that the occult consequences of birth—its unexpected, incalculable impact on the psyche of everyone concerned (mother, father, siblings, child)—can be deeply disturbing: the pathology of such disturbance can illuminate "normal" existence just as much as art. Crises and masterpieces floodlight human life.

Rhode's book certainly does so. Written with deliberate plainness—in short, pregnant declarative sentences, each one a potential essay subject—it wears its surprises as lightly as its learning.

> "Oedipus responds to the cryptic violently. He seeks to destroy opposition. The dreamer [a woman patient] has begun to realise that the cryptic is not inevitably malign."
>
> "Many of us have written down our dreams, thinking them visions, and looked at them the next morning and found them rubbish. Coleridge wrote down a dream that, on the page, has the power in itself (and for perpetuity) of generating the visionary glow."
>
> "Hamlet senior [the Ghost] is a Cartesian mind, divorced

[1] *Theatre of Sleep: An Anthology of Literary Dreams*. By Guido Almansi and Claude Béguin. Picador, £4.95.

[2] *On Birth and Madness*. By Eric Rhode. Duckworth, £14.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from body (as Descartes on at least one occasion liked to imagine mind as divorced)—tormented by bodily desires and jealousies."

"As Shakespeare's treatment of the action takes on a naturalistic diffidence, Hamlet's questionings acquire a non-worldly, theological vigour."

"The master painter closes his eyes, as it were, to achieve insight. . . . Cézanne swoons before his subject. . . . He risks losing everything. . . . In a dream, Descartes finds himself blown about like chaff in the wind. Out of helplessness, there emerge configurations—like the whirlwind itself."

Assembling these quotations, I'm surprised again—as I was on first reading Rhode's book—to find no mention of Jung. For what haunts this subtle and discursive rumination is the suspicion that dreams and reveries may be clues to some external reality, an order of things—perhaps, even, some religious revelation. Rhode nowhere explicitly presses this intimation; but in the half-light of the half-world that absorbs him, its lineaments seem to be those of ungratified desire.

Allusions like that, and near-puns, appear on the evidence of this book to be part of Rhode's professional stock-in-trade. A patient's reference to "a waisted dress" is said to imply the undertone of "wasted". Symbols take on reciprocal connotations, like a compass read upside-down. And sometimes I have the impression that Rhode reads into his patients' minds his own inventive intelligence, crediting them with unconscious intentions well beyond their scope. This, however, may be a layman's condescension: people, like other animals, are often more aware than we assume.

There's no denying, either, that *On Birth and Madness* is a "difficult" book. It demands close reading and careful thought. There are few signposts. The lapidary prose is sober, button-holing, mesmeric, a meaning monotone. Like some looming and portentous silent film, it imposes its own steady rhythm, slowing us down to assimilate its layers of meaning. We sometimes risk losing the thread.

Nevertheless, I warmly recommend it. Courageously alone in the scarred no-man's-land between psychology, philosophy, and literary studies, it goes on transmitting signals like a stranded space-ship—signals to the spirit and the understanding which help us to fathom ourselves. Without endorsing the R. D. Laing school's heresy that madness is a clever form of sanity, it obliges us to question what we mean by "madness", and to recognise that some forms of mental "malfunction" reveal a lot about the circuit diagrams within the skull. And even as I write these words, I sense the book implicitly reproving me: mechanistic metaphors can be as unhelpful as words like "mad". Instead, we should attend to our dreams. Those home-made are bound to be more nourishing than the products of the Hollywood factory.

M

Salt

Dazed, snow wandered down the window.
On either side, the curtains looked
  Like price codes. He stared, soon to die,
Across the quiet where we worked

  To find each other, still careful
Not to fall off. Hospital heat
  Made his skin shine and the salt fill
The cracks in his face. A shipmate,

  He once told me, died from drinking
Seawater when they were adrift
  And I dabbed his forehead, thinking
Of it. There was nothing I left

  My father that day but a card,
Wyllie's *On the Estuary*,
  To remind him, when young, he'd crewed
For the old painter, but eerie

  Things in his head had taken him
Worlds from the Solent, from home. Clips
  On faulty jump-leads, my hands, firm
And clean, left a print on his; gaps

  Between priceless curtains, now drawn
The last time, stared with snow (like salt
  Blown in from each dried-up ocean
He'd sailed on), snow that could not melt.

Ian Caws

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kafka as the Insurance Man

Beyond the Conventional Image—By RITCHIE ROBERTSON

ALAN BENNETT's television play *The Insurance Man*, shown last year on BBC2, managed to explore both Kafka's imaginative world and the real world on which it was founded. It was set in the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute in Prague, where Kafka worked from 1908 to 1922. But it was only partly an attempt to reconstruct Kafka's day-to-day life. Richard Eyre's filming tried to provide a visual counterpart to Kafka's prose, in which a slightly odd perspective or a gratuitous detail suffice to make the everyday seem strange. The views up lift-shafts and down stair-wells reminded one of the moment in *The Metamorphosis* when, having dismissed their lodgers, the Samsa family follow their progress down the stairs and watch them disappearing (and reappearing) at certain points on each flight. The offices with their flimsy wooden partitions closely resembled Kafka's description of the garret rooms where Court officials process documents and browbeat the public.

Besides recalling Kafka's settings, the film created plausible equivalents for many central images from Kafka's fiction, and succeeded in evoking more recollections than perhaps its authors foresaw. The young man, Franz, who woke up to find his body disfigured by psoriasis, recalled Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis*, of course, and also the shock that Josef K. experiences on being arrested first thing in the morning. But he also made one think of the boy with the hideous wound in *A Country Doctor*. His conviction that only Dr Kafka could grant his claim for compensation recalled the boy's pathetic and unjustified faith in the doctor's powers, as well as K.'s more aggressive attempts to reach the official Klamm in *The Castle*. And the clients waiting meekly on benches not only brought to mind the accused persons who wait with bowed heads in the Court corridors, but when an official appeared and chased them away, another image of dehumanisation was evoked: the anonymous rabble of Castle servants who are driven into the stables by a barmaid with a whip.

But the film's real achievement was to show us the working environment in which Kafka spent, by rough calculation, some twenty thousand hours of his life. Scholars, too, have been busy, and all the relevant documents have been assembled by the veteran "*Kafkaloge*" Klaus Hermsdorf in his meticulously annotated edition of Kafka's *Amtliche Schriften* (East Berlin, 1984). Here one can read Kafka's letters to his superiors (requesting promotion, salary increases, sick leave), as well as the numerous documents on aspects of accident insurance which he wrote for publication in the Institute's reports. Their contents can be gathered from a letter Kafka wrote in December 1912 to Felice Bauer (to whom he later twice became engaged), promising to send her

> "an annual report of our Institute with an essay by me on cylindrical safety-cutter spindles! With illustrations! Or one about safety milling heads! Dearest, there are still many pleasures in store for you. . . ."

These reports may not enlarge the Kafka canon, but nor are they wholly unconnected with the style and subject-matter of his fiction. Some affinities are pointed out by Hermsdorf, whose 80-page introduction is in any case indispensable reading if one wants to know about the reality of Kafka's working life.

AFTER GRADUATING FROM Prague University with an undistinguished degree in law, Kafka spent five months in a solicitor's office, and a year gathering practical experience at the Prague district court, before joining the local branch of the *Assicurazioni Generali*, a private insurance firm based in Trieste. The ten-hour working day and the frequent unpaid overtime were bad enough; but Kafka was also expected to learn Italian in the evenings, so as to equip himself to deal with visitors from Head Office. This experience presumably helped to inspire the scene in *The Trial* where Josef K. is embarrassed at being unable to understand an Italian visitor's dialect. Kafka soon began surreptitiously looking for a less demanding job, and he found it in one of the insurance institutes for industrial workers which the Austrian government had established in seven cities in 1889. The Institute in Prague was the most important of these, since Bohemia was the chief industrial region of the Empire. Industry was expanding rapidly—and the introduction of new machinery was causing a sharp rise in the number of accidents. In 1911 the Institute employed over 250 officials to deal with 722,478 insured workers, one-third of the industrial capacity of the Austrian half of the Empire.

Joining the Institute was not straightforward, for Imperial public service was normally barred to Jews. However, the

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supreme authority in the Institute, Dr Otto Příbram, was a Jewish convert to Catholicism whose son Ewald had been in Kafka's class at school, and his influence got Kafka appointed. "An average official in the Institute imagines this man, not on earth, but in the clouds", Kafka told Felice. Some years later, Kafka warned Max Brod that there was no chance of another such appointment, and alluded to Příbram's ambiguous status: "The Institute is inaccessible to Jews. It's impossible to understand how the two Jews who are there (with the help of the third) got in, and it will not happen again. . . ." Even Příbram's influence might have been insufficient, had not Kafka (as Klaus Hermsdorf points out) been acceptably neutral in the conflict between the German and Czech nationalities. He was fluent in both languages; but he had a Czech name; while as a Jew he could not be fully identified with either group.

FROM KAFKA'S VIEWPOINT the Institute's main advantage was the shorter working day (8 to 2 without a break) which he hoped would give him leisure for writing. In practice, however, he never managed to reconcile the exhausting work in the Institute with his literary career. There were periods of intense productivity, like the autumn and winter of 1912 in which Kafka wrote *The Judgement*, *The Metamorphosis*, and much of the novel misleadingly known as *America* (Kafka's title was *Der Verschollene*, or *Missing, Presumed Lost*), besides a daily letter to Felice. But there were longer periods of comparative sterility, in which Kafka's diary is full of ideas for stories that seldom get beyond the first paragraph. The energy he needed for writing was consumed in official correspondence, dictating to secretaries, and making tours of inspection of factories. He also gave occasional public addresses to inform people about the work of the Institute (an account of one of these has been recovered from a Bohemian provincial newspaper by the Canadian scholar Anthony Northey, and is reprinted in Hermsdorf's volume).

Kafka's letters to Felice and others are full of complaints about his boredom and his inefficiency:

> "I can't be tidy, I lose files even if I hold on to them with both hands, and I can't work on any file against which I have a particular antipathy, even if I have to endure the menace that comes from it for years, and I can't conceal, prevent, or excuse anything, but must let everything descend upon me like a thunderstorm upon the earth."

His business trips sometimes meant getting up at 4.30 on a cold, wet morning, and he must often have felt as disgruntled as the commercial traveller Gregor Samsa does about train connections, bad, irregular meals, and superficial human contacts. As time went on his work became more burdensome, and he dreamed of escaping from it by becoming a full-time writer in Berlin or being called up for Army service. Instead, he owed his release to a haemorrhage which he suffered in August 1917 and which was diagnosed as a sign of pulmonary tuberculosis. From then until his retirement on a pension in July 1922 he was in the office for only 18 months, spending long periods on sick-leave in mountain sanatoria.

But his work, though arduous, was not always dreary or frustrating. He was able to describe it wittily in a letter to Max Brod:

> "For I have so much to do! Apart from my other tasks, in my four districts people fall off the scaffolding and into the machinery as if they were drunk; all the beams tip up, all the embankments crumble, all the ladders slip; if people put anything up, it falls down, if they put anything down, they fall over it themselves. And one gets a headache from these young girls in the china factories who incessantly throw themselves downstairs while carrying towers of crockery. . . ."

It was an excellent idea of Alan Bennett's to incorporate this passage into the speech delivered by Kafka in honour of his superior. For Kafka's speech thus reveals both his humour and the position of trust that he held in the Institute. Only six months after his appointment Kafka was indeed invited to deliver an address welcoming the newly appointed Director of the Institute, Dr Robert Marschner, who became a personal friend. Marschner did not conform to the stereotype of the bureaucrat. Still less did he resemble the Deputy Director of the bank in *The Trial*, with whom Josef K. is constantly jockeying for position. He was an academic who lectured at the Prague Technical College and had published numerous books and papers on insurance and social policy. His political sympathies were liberal; and his friends included Thomas Masaryk, later President of the first Czechoslovak Republic. In his spare time he was a Goethe scholar and an avid reader of Stifter, Nietzsche, and other writers.

"People are far nicer to me than I deserve, especially my Director", Kafka wrote to Felice in November 1912. "Recently in his office we read poems by Heine together out of a book, while in the ante-room servants, department heads, and clients, perhaps with the most urgent business, waited impatiently to be admitted. . . ."

KAFKA'S IMPORTANCE in the Institute is shown by the fact that he accompanied Marschner to an international conference on industrial safety in Vienna in 1913, where the latter gave a paper. The only other Institute employee present was Kafka's immediate superior, Eugen Pfohl (whose testimonials reveal the highest opinion of Kafka's gifts and assiduity, and who assured him in 1916 that the department would collapse if he went on sick leave). Kafka seems to have got on well with all his colleagues, thanks to his tactful reserve and his avoidance of any politics. Some were particularly congenial, like Josef Krätzig, who shared Kafka's fourth-floor office and told him the details of an unhappy love-affair (Kafka did not reciprocate this confidence); Alois Gütling, in the next room, whose poems Kafka recommended to a publisher; and the other Jew, Siegmund Fleischmann, whom Kafka described as "three-quarters Czech; a complete Social Democrat; . . . profoundly uninterested in literature; has now in his forties married a Czech typist; his father-in-law is a poor joiner—

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

altogether a man with whom one can have very good and frank conversations. . . ."

I should therefore hesitate to agree with Hermsdorf (and other Marxist commentators, notably the late Ernst Fischer) that Kafka experienced "alienated labour" at first hand and recreated the experience in his fiction. Nor should one suppose that his colleagues were hard, ambitious bureaucrats like Josef K. Alan Bennett's play is rather misleading in depicting most of them as cynical, womanising, and given to bullying their clients. Doubtless some were, but the Institute was more likely to attract decent persons like Marschner and Fleischmann, who genuinely wanted to help. Brod's memoir makes it clear that Kafka shared this desire, that he was deeply distressed when mutilated workers displayed their injuries, and that he wondered at the docility which made the workers appeal for compensation instead of battering the Institute to pieces.

KAFKA'S FEELINGS might well be tender—for (as Bennett's play reminded us) he was himself an industrial employer. In the autumn of 1911, under family pressure, he became a sleeping partner in the Prague Asbestos Factory Hermann & Co., founded by his brother-in-law. The factory was fully mechanised and had 25 employees, though it never made a profit. Much to his annoyance, Kafka was sometimes obliged to spend his afternoons in the factory after finishing work in the Institute. His diary contains some observations on the dehumanising effect of industrial labour:

> "Yesterday in the factory. The girls in their unbearably dirty and untidy clothes, with their hair as tousled as if they had just woken up, with their facial expressions frozen by the incessant noise of the transmissions and the single machine which keeps stopping, even though it is automatic. They are not people, one does not say good morning to them, one does not apologise when one bumps against them; if one calls them over to do a small job they do it but go straight back to the machine. One shows them what to do with a jerk of one's head; they stand there in their petticoats, subjected to minimal power yet without enough calm intelligence to acknowledge this power with glances and curtseys and win its favour. But when six o'clock comes and they call this out to one another, they undo their neck-cloths and head-squares, dust themselves off with a brush which travels round the room and is called for impatiently, they pull their skirts on over their heads and get their hands clean—then they are women after all. They can smile despite their pallor and bad teeth; they shake their stiff bodies; they can no longer be jostled, stared at or ignored; one presses oneself against the greasy crates to let them past; one keeps one's hat in one's hand when they say good night, and does not know how to react when they hold our overcoats ready for us to put on. . . ."

Kafka's attitude to industry was humane, not doctrinaire. Attempts to ascribe to him a commitment to socialism or even anarchism are not supported by real evidence. But clearly he was unusually sensitive to the effects of industry on human beings: not only on the factory girls who cease to be people

POETRY REVIEW

'FOR ME, AND FOR I SUPPOSE MOST PEOPLE, IT IS *THE* POETRY MAGAZINE.'
U.A. FANTHORPE

Poetry Review, edited by Peter Forbes, is the foremost poetry magazine in the UK. For those who want to keep abreast of developments in contemporary poetry – readers, writers, teachers, librarians, students – it's the magazine you have to read.

RECENT ISSUES HAVE FEATURED

Joseph Brodsky, Peter Redgrove, John Updike, Charles Tomlinson, Derek Walcott, Miroslav Holub, Craig Raine

AUTUMN ISSUE

IMPORTANT PLACES: POETRY & POLITICS

available now

INCLUDES

TONY HARRISON *A Hiroshima Sequence*
DAVID GASCOYNE *on the poets of the Spanish Civil War*
New poems by IRINA RATUSHINSKAYA, CAROL RUMENS, GAVIN EWART, CAROL ANN DUFFY, DANNIE ABSE, E.A. MARKHAM
EDWIN MORGAN, CAROL RUMENS *and others on East European Poetry*
MICHAEL HOROVITZ *on* ALLEN GINSBERG
TONY CURTIS *on* R.S. THOMAS
REVIEWS *of Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, George Barker, Peter Redgrove, Anne Stevenson, Alan Brownjohn, Anthony Thwaite, John Wain, Fleur Adcock's* Faber Book of 20th-Century Women's Poetry *&c.*
REVIEWS BY
Peter Levi, George MacBeth, Anne Stevenson, William Scammell and others

POETRY REVIEW is published quarterly by the Poetry Society, price £2.50 + 50p p&p; subscriptions £10 pa; overseas (surface mail) £11; UK institutions £13; air-mail rates available on request.

Please send me: 'IMPORTANT PLACES' ☐ *tick box*
A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION TO POETRY REVIEW ☐

I enclose a cheque/PO for

NAME

ADDRESS

POETRY REVIEW, 21 EARLS COURT SQUARE, LONDON SW5 9DE

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

during working hours, but on their employers who feel embarrassment when the girls reassert their humanity. The final change of pronoun from "one" to "we" acknowledges Kafka's complicity in these processes. With its realistic detail and its insights into social behaviour, this diary entry resembles the brief sketches published in Kafka's first book, *Betrachtung* (*Contemplation*, 1912). Perhaps it is regrettable that Kafka abandoned this literary mode in favour of the relatively schematic and self-enclosed fantasy of his major works.

IN HIS DIARY (for 10 October 1911) Kafka noted:

> "Wrote a sophistical article for and against the Institute in the *Tetschen-Bodenbacher Zeitung*."

Curiously, it is from this article, now rescued from the local newspaper where it appeared, that Kafka's commitment to the goals of the Institute is most apparent. He knew that the Institute had hitherto been able to achieve very little on behalf of the workers. And he knew also that this was partly the fault of employers, who were supposed to fund the Institute in proportion to the number of their employees; but they had until recently not been obliged to disclose how many people they employed and hence had kept the Institute short of money. It was only under Marschner's vigorous direction that the Institute began to show a profit. To avoid offending the employers or the Institute by too open criticism, Kafka stressed the importance of its work and took refuge in humour:

> "It is obvious that such a new endeavour cannot avoid what may be called youthful absurdities. Thus, as one can gather from this annual report, the Institute had formed a collection of safety equipment in its headquarters; interested parties, as is stated in the report, are urged to visit this collection, and yet, apart from a collection of safety-goggles, this whole collection seems to contain (we have made a count in the annual report) hardly more than six items. . . ."

Few of Kafka's official writings afforded scope for these rhetorical touches. The essays on safety-cutter spindles, car insurance, and the prevention of accidents in quarries are severely factual. Here, for example, is a passage from the article on round safety-cutters:

> "Our illustrations show the difference between square-headed cutters and round cutters in regard to safety precautions. The blades of the square-headed cutter (illustration 1), attached directly by screws to the cutter, revolve with their naked edge at the rate of 3,800-4,000 revolutions per minute. The risks which arise for the worker from the great distance between the cutter-blade and the table-top are clearly apparent. Therefore these cutters have either been used in ignorance of the risk, which thus became, if anything, greater, or in full awareness of constant and unavoidable risk. An extremely careful worker might be able to ensure that during his work (i.e. moving the piece of wood over the head of the planing-blade) no joint of his finger projected beyond the object he was working on, but the principal risk defied all precautions. Even the most careful worker could not prevent his hand from entering the blade aperture if it slipped or if, as frequently happens, he spun the wood back by placing one hand on the piece he was planing on the machine-table and moving it towards the cutter-blade with the other. . . ."

Illustration 2 then shows the results of such accidents by displaying a gruesome array of hands, all lacking one or more finger-joints, or even entire fingers.

In the original, at least, this text has a lucidity and even elegance very unusual in technical publications, especially in German. It should remind us that Kafka combined a rare stylistic gift with an unusual interest in technology and technical processes. He was, for example, probably the first German writer to describe an aeroplane. After attending an aircraft display in northern Italy in 1909, he wrote at Brod's urging a short descriptive article about it, "The Aeroplanes in Brescia", which was published in the Prague newspaper *Bohemia*. In 1909-10 the Institute gave him time off to attend lectures on engineering at the Prague Technical College. From the above-quoted passage one can discern not only technical expertise but also a morbid interest in mutilation which may be found in his diaries and most drastically in the story *In the Penal Settlement*. Evidently his official reports allowed Kafka to practise the clear and dispassionate style in which he describes the functioning of the punishment-machine. And, though the punishment it inflicts seems archaic, the fictional machine is itself thoroughly modern, with its upper and lower sections powered by independent electric batteries.

WE SHOULD IMAGINE Kafka's daily work, therefore, not as alienated or even as particularly uncongenial, certainly not as helpless wandering in a bureaucratic labyrinth. Like most people, he was obliged to make his living from a job to which he was not strongly attracted, but he coped with it more than efficiently. In contrast to Max Brod, who regarded his twenty years in the Post Office as so much wasted time, Kafka found his work feeding his imagination. It provided the materials for the grotesque bureaucracies of *The Trial* and *The Castle*. If Příbram was remote, Klamm is more so. If Kafka's desk was untidy, then the room occupied by the Castle official Sordini is still worse, for it emits a constant crashing sound produced by the stacks of documents that keep toppling to the floor. His official reports trained Kafka's style and expressed two sides of his character that might seem to contradict each other. One was the morbid fascination with pain that dominates much of his best-known fiction and made him once tell Milena Jesenská:

> "Torture is very important to me, I think of nothing but torturing and being tortured."

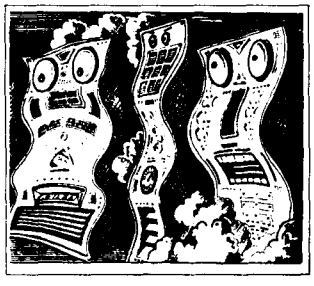
The other was the humanity which, though less apparent in his fiction, was clearly an outstanding feature of his personality. Klaus Hermsdorf and Alan Bennett deserve gratitude for helping us, in such different ways, to get behind the one-sided, conventionally projected image of Kafka.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES & TOPICS

"New Tech" & the Soul of Man

By O. L. Smaryl



"NEW TECHNOLOGY" is the product of the imagination of a select band of physicists and engineers. The name must be familiar by now, but what does it stand for? Computers? robots? information processing? I would define it as a technique which is born of the labours of modern electronics and optics, and has brought about radically new relations between computers, communications, and the control of machines. A more direct definition would say that it is concerned with a new type of high-level automation.

An example. Automation of the old type may be represented by a lawn-mower to which all the information about a lawn (e.g. where the trees are) is given; it may then cut the lawn, moving in a predetermined manner. Such a machine could not "think": it would mow down everything in its path, including its master.

An automatic lawn-mower using "New Technology" would be equipped with sensors and an electronic brain; it could make decisions on the spot. If, for example, the croquet set was left out on the lawn, the mower could gently push the various pieces into the area already cut, and then carry on with the job. This intelligent machine might also be endowed with social graces. If another lawn-mower came within hearing distance, it could slow down and say in synthesised speech: "Nice to see you. And have those old wheels been oiled today? . . ."

"New Technology" could perform this kind of feat because of its amazing speed, vast storage capacity, minute power consumption, and incredibly low price. This is not to say that other technologies have been stagnant. A quarter-of-a-century has brought major changes in the design of aeroplanes, for example, but not comparable achievements. According to an article written a few years ago:[1]

> ". . . if the aircraft industry evolved as spectacularly as the computer industry over the past 25 years, a Boeing 767 would cost $500 today, and it would circle the globe in twenty minutes on five gallons of fuel."

What will be the consequences of the *ménage à trois* of computers, communications, and control? There is a danger in making guesses, so I shall modestly rely on guide-lines that may lead to what scientists call "a first order approximation". May I suggest that the best guide is Marxism? Marxism has the great virtue of setting the scene in terms of a struggle between the progressives and the reactionaries, between the good guys and the bad guys. At the same time, the model it provides is far from static. In contrast to standard Hollywood movies, in Marxist historiography it is quite possible for certain actors to start off as apparent heroes and finish the course as died-in-the-wood villains. Take the bourgeoisie. They were the good guys when they fought feudal landlords, but as soon as they started to oppress the working class they became the bad guys. Such metamorphoses can take place within a very short time; One may be "in" in February, and "out" in October.

I have a penchant for explanations in terms of a struggle between adversaries; I also find attractive the holy trinity of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. But those are not the only reasons for my partiality for Marxist theory. I really have no option. What other theory would predict such unequivocal relationships between the state of technology and the structure of society?

And who else besides Karl Marx (in his *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*, Berlin, 1859) would so categorically state that:

> "At a certain stage of their development the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production. . . . With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."

And, a little further on:

> "No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself."

IF THE GATES of Highgate Cemetery suddenly burst open and Karl Marx rose from his ashes, what would he see? New higher relations of production maturing in the womb of the present society and shaking the old order to its roots. The conflict has begun, and the battle lines are clearly drawn: the antagonists are the working class on one side, and those with a vested interest in "New Technology" on the other. It is no exaggeration to say that proletarians are fighting for their working lives, and our natural sympathies should be with the workers of the world. If some of us are worried about trends of relatively minor importance like the impending extinction of the whale, how much more should we worry about the disapppearance of the working class? But concern, sympathy, compassion are of little avail in a battle in which the forces of history are resolutely engaged against the forces of sentiment. *Objectively*, the working class is reactionary: and how could mere rhetoric do away with that simple fact? The working class will disappear because the type of operations performed

[1] H. D. Toong and A. Gupta, "Personal Computers", *Scientific American* (December 1982).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nowadays by people in various factories will be done better and more cheaply by machines. In this coming age of super-automation, all work which involves low-level judgments will be unnecessary—and unavailable.

Will there, then, still be a class structure? The Marxist answer to that question is again unequivocal. Classes must exist as long as different people have different relations to "the means of production". So there will be an upper class and a lower class; a ruling class whose members will have access to these means, and a class of underdogs who will neither be able to produce anything saleable nor able to sell their labour on the open market.

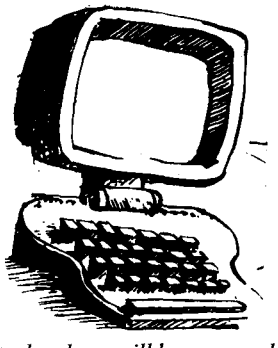
Will the theory of "surplus value" still stand? Yes, it will; there will be an excess of production, consumed mostly by the parasitic class. However, owing to the changed relations of unfettered production, the parasitic class will be the lower class—kept in idle luxury by the upper class.

Will there be any radical changes in the ways and means of production? I think there will be, brought about by three circumstances: first, the low price of computers; secondly, their small size; and thirdly, the vast transmission capacity of optical fibres.[2] All three point towards decentralisation. If computers are cheap and small enough, then one can set up a business in the spare bedroom and use optical fibres (available in about a decade's time, I presume) to talk to other computers in the big wide world out there.

Mass production will still be the concern of large conglomerates, but they will become ponderous, unwieldy giants, conservative in outlook, unable and unwilling to adapt swiftly. Major innovations will come mainly from small independent groups of highly creative individuals. Why should this be so? I think the question should be turned round. Why should creative people work for large companies? At present the great corporations offer better facilities and better salaries, but require in exchange, like Mephistopheles from Faust, their souls. Why should innovative engineers compromise anything in the future when they can look forward to much fun (to a good software engineer, a computer is like a *genie* from the *Arabian Nights*) and to inordinate profits at a small risk—and still keep body and soul for themselves?

Dissident Spectre

Moscow



THE "Catch 22" of Soviet electronics is: "Computer, Yes; Free Information, No." The situation is one that may give comfort to the guardians of secrecy in the Kremlin. But it is one that is alarming members of the scientific and academic élite, who are saying that unless something is done to raise computer consciousness in the Soviet Union, the East-West gap in electronic technology will become unbridgeable.

Although large computers have long become a fixture in government agencies, large industrial plants and in the military, the debate over the spread of personal computers has disclosed an anxiety that unless Soviet society can be made "computer-friendly", computers will remain an exotic tool.

But while Soviet scientists cite slow production, shoddy computers, lack of consumer interest and similar factors, Western experts believe a far greater obstacle stands in the way—the inherent wariness of the state about any technology whose grist is information. At Soviet offices, common office copiers are kept under strict control and are locked away at night.

Such considerations effectively rule out the possibility that private citizens will be able to buy personal computers any time soon, and officials usually talk about supplying them to schools, offices, and research facilities.

There is also the spectre of dissidents armed with high-speed printers, churning out copies of Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn's history of the Soviet labour camp system, "The Gulag Archipelago", from floppy disks smuggled in by foreign tourists.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

LET ME COME DOWN to more serious questions. Will democracy survive? There are some who argue that "New Technology" is just the thing Big Brother would love. In my view there is no such danger. Decentralisation of brain power will necessarily be followed by decentralisation of political power. Local issues will have an audience, but state politics or USWE (United States of Western Europe) politics will become of less interest. In an era when unlimited entertainment is available (thanks to optical fibres), who will want to listen to a speech by the Prime Minister? Anyway, the real issues will become technically more and more complex, and will doubtless need computers both for their formulation and for their evaluation.

What about elections? There will of course, be one every year or so. The actual choice will be between several competing computer programmes to run the various administrative units.

According to Marxist theory, the existence of more than one class will lead to class war. That may make my analysis all too fallible. At this point, therefore, I must "revise" one important Marxist tenet. I hold the view that the class war is not so much about possession of "the means of production" as about the ways of power. I contend that the instinct for domination will be satisfied by the *Volks-computer* owned by every man, woman, and child (above the age of four). It will, of course, be much less powerful than those the mandarin boffins have, but it will still be able to play the part of a second-hand *genie*.

I am not as optimistic as the Nobel Prize-winner Dennis Gabor was when he envisaged (in *Inventing the Future*, 1983):

> ". . . the coming of the world of *post-historic* man; of the common man living for his own happiness . . . and of the uncommon man who finds his fulfilment in enriching the life of the common man."

[2] It may be worth noting here (in case it is not generally known) that with present techniques the full text of the 30-volume *Encyclopaedia Britannica* can be transmitted on a single fibre in a fraction of a second.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THOUGHT FOR THE YEAR

A Christmas gift subscription to ENCOUNTER is not only a thought for the day. It's thought for the year. For a twelvemonth each issue renews your good wishes, reaffirms your community of interest. In more senses than one, an ENCOUNTER subscription is a truly thoughtful present.

And, for you, no crowded shopping, no parcel-packing and posting. We look after everything. What's more, as an ENCOUNTER reader you're entitled to our special Christmas gift rate - **saving you no less than 25% of the usual price.** This applies both to new Christmas gift subscriptions and renewals of any you gave last year.

You'll find an order form overleaf. Please return it to us well before Christmas.

This offer closes on January 16th, 1988.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHRISTMAS GIFT ORDER FORM

These gift subscriptions will start with the January 1988 issue, posted shortly before Christmas, and will run for one year. Time permitting, a specially designed card announcing your gift will reach the recipient by Christmas Day. These special rates are available for new Christmas gift subscriptions and for the renewal of any subscriptions you gave last Christmas. The offer closes on 16th January 1988.

YOUR GIFTS

Please enter Christmas gift subscriptions for the following:

BLOCK LETTERS THROUGHOUT PLEASE

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

Sign Gift Card from_____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

Sign Gift Card from_____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

Sign Gift Card from_____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

Sign Gift Card from_____

Please mark any renewals of last year's gifts RENEWAL. Extra gifts can be ordered on a separate sheet of paper.

YOUR NAME

My name and address are as follows:

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

PAYMENT

25% OFF

The cost of each subscription, at the special Christmas gift rate, is £13.50 to the UK; $29.25 (or £18.30) air-speeded to the USA & Canada; £14.25 to anywhere else. Dollar cheques, sterling cheques and postal orders can be accepted; if you can only pay separately by money order or bank transfer, please give details of the arrangements you have made. A receipt will not be sent unless requested. For payment by American Express please fill in your account number below and sign.

Please charge to my American Express a/c No.

Total payment: £ _____

$ _____

Signed _____

Encounter: NOV
44 Great Windmill Street,
London W1V 7PA England

To avoid damaging your magazine cut along this line

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But why shouldn't Western society find the resources to be able to adapt to these changes? A combination of *panem et circenses* will satisfy the common man, and the un-common man will be kept happy with the new tools at his disposal.

WHAT MIGHT BE THE EFFECT of "New Technology" on Soviet society? Obviously, the rigid, centrally organised, information-starved society that exists in the Soviet Union today is entirely at variance with the demands of "New Technology". The Soviet leaders will, of course, try to delay the necessary reforms; but even their power is insufficient to oppose historical inevitability. I suspect that the Soviet system will collapse because in its present form it will not be able to harness "New Technology". Does that matter? Could not an economically weak Soviet Union carry on indefinitely? It is true that whatever the material complications, internal disaffection could not bring the system down; the *KGB* would see to that. The change will come when the Soviet leaders realise that without social reforms they will be losing the global military race. Then, belatedly, they will allow decentralisation of the economy and the setting up of small private firms, and will relax their absolute monopoly of information.

But once "New Technology" takes a grip on the economy, will a reversal of the policy ever be possible? As soon as information is available there will be genuine discussions—first of local and then of planetary issues. Initially, there will be only one computer programme, but in the fullness of time alternative programmes will be able to compete for electoral support. The beginning of the end may well come around 2030 when a Soviet delegation flies to Geneva to discuss a convenient merger with the United States of Western Europe. They will have to. How could they possibly fight "historical inevitability"?

IMPORTANT!

To avoid waste we have decided to revise our mailing list for indexes. The present list is being cancelled, and a new up-to-date list is being compiled.

If you wish to receive the index in future, please be sure to return the coupon (or a similar letter if you prefer not to cut your copy).

Two indexes, for the two volumes published in the preceding twelve months, are mailed around the beginning of each year. Thus, early in 1987 we shall be mailing indexes for Volumes LXVI (January-May 1986) and LXVII (June-December 1986). Indexes are free of charge.

Please send the ENCOUNTER Index, addressed as follows:

NAME (personal) .....

NAME (institution).....

ADDRESS .....

.....

Postal/Zip Code .....

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

The Power of "the Fourth Estate"

ONE RECENT EVENING (it was Sunday, 17 May) the television and radio news bulletins opened with Michel Platini's decision to terminate his footballing career. Several minutes were devoted to gathering the impressions of the ageing young man in question, his family, and various public figures, including the General Secretary of the Socialist Party, Lionel Jospin. (But not Jacques Toubon, which shows how completely the Right is out of the limelight these days.) Cameras and microphones next turned their attention and ours to the Belgian *Grand Prix* and its winner, Alain Prost, who by a thrilling coincidence turned out to be the same age (32) as Platini. Surprise, surprise. We were then transported abruptly to the Paris Marathon and on to the Cannes Film Festival.

The only political subject dealt with at any length was the most "mediagenic", namely the arguments among the majority about the *Front National*. In other words, the alacrity with which the French liberal Right had rushed headlong into all the traps that the Socialists laid for it, using Jean-Marie Le Pen as bait. The only event of that third weekend in May 1987 that may have a lasting influence on our future and may well find a place in the history books—the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow (and its consequences for European defence in the event of a possible Soviet-American disarmament treaty)—received little or no mention.

At the same time, a conference was drawing to a close in Paris. The International Geopolitical Institute, founded and presided over by Marie-France Garaud, had organised an international symposium on the subject "*Médias, Pouvoirs et Démocraties*". For three days, a glittering company had been assembled from the Old and New Worlds, comprising politi-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cians, sociologists, jurists, teachers, businessmen, journalists, and key figures from the major media. Accepting the principle that the good working of a democratic order presupposes that its citizens should be "well-informed", one wonders whether the media explosion improves or impairs "informedness" in free societies. The French media coverage of the final evening of this august international seminar showed that the question is at least worth asking.

A constellation of themes that can be neither separated nor lumped together tends to stamp all thinking about "the press and the media" with a congenital confusion. Firstly, there is the problem of freedom of expression. This is a right inscribed on the birth-certificates of all democracies: *la presse est libre*. Then there is the circulation and processing of news, the market for it, and its supply and consumption—and that is something different. "Freedom of expression" is no guarantee of the quality or richness of the information provided. A thousand different opinions may be a thousand mistaken opinions. Freedom is invaluable, but it does not exclude the possibility of error. The hackneyed assertion that information need only be "pluralist" to be good is absurd. It is opinion that is pluralist; information is accurate or inaccurate, important or secondary, plentiful or scarce. The electronic media are probably good vehicles for exchanges of opinion, but less good for thorough, verified, all-round information.

Then there are all the problems of the influence of the media on public opinion and on professional politicians—and vice versa. Is public opinion at the mercy of the media? Or do the media have the upper hand over politicians, whose motto nowadays would seem to be "media coverage or death"—when it is not a case of death by media coverage? Or is it, on the contrary, the politicians, through the media, who now manage and manipulate opinion as they please? Or are both politicians and media increasingly becoming mere slaves to opinion? In which case, does the exercise of electoral choice in a representative democracy in fact preserve anything genuine at all?

This gives rise to a fresh question: what is the legitimacy of this "power" on the part of the media? To politicians disposed to complain about the "guerrilla war" they say the press wages on them, the journalist replies that his role is that of a "counter-power". This is another simplistic idea. To be a counter-power on a permanent footing would imply that the power was permanently in the wrong, which (at least according to the theory of probabilities) is impossible. It would further presuppose that media people, columnists, critics, commentators, possessed a monopoly of competence and honesty.

A last theme, finally, is linked to all the others: the extent to which the media modify the very way in which society perceives and supplies the elements of the public debate and the way in which it understands it, retains it, or puts it out of mind.

WHAT, IN SHORT, is the nature of "the Fourth Estate"? Has the emergence of the mass electronic media radically transformed it? and if so, has democratic life been totally revolutionised as a result?

These are the three main questions—and they are closely intertwined—to which most of the others can probably be reduced. If the Fourth Estate is of one substance with democracy from the outset, the very expression has no value except by process of analogy. The other three powers are defined by constitutional texts. To be legitimate, the men and women who wield them must be recruited in accordance with precise rules—election, competition, appointment by competent authorities. They incur specific sanctions if guilty of misuse of authority, maladministration, or serious error. However, these criteria become extremely vague when it comes to the vaunted power to inform and communicate. Offering the public information, opinions, pictures, photographs, news reports, and exhortations to take-one-side-or-another is a right that is included in the general rights of the citizen. The power that may flow from it derives from success. It is a *de facto* power, just as the legitimacy conferred by the public, by the audience, is due to a good professional reputation—or to a bad one in the case of the partisan press, given to scandal-mongering and defamation, for it too has its loyal followers.

One can succeed in the press and the media because one is scrupulous, concerned about facts, and impartial in analysis—or for the very opposite reason. In both cases you will have power, even legitimacy, because a section of the public follows you, buys you, listens to you, or watches you on the screen. Accordingly, some excellent observers of our age grant the notion of a Fourth Estate no more than a purely metaphorical resonance from a bygone 18th-century "age of Revolution". For Alain Minc, the media constitute neither power nor counter-power, but a reality in the same sense as the economy: "Only one or two unwitting heirs of Marxism talk about economic power. . . ." As Fernand Braudel has taught us, the economy is society; they are one and the same. The media and society are similarly indissociable.

FEW SOCIOLOGISTS would deny the metamorphosis that communication is currently undergoing: *mondialisation*, instantaneousness, the global broadening of scope. Nevertheless, historians of the press recall illustrious campaigns conducted or launched exclusively in newspapers—before (but also since) the birth of the electronic media—with effects often more striking than those of many television programmes.

It was with his pen that Albert Londres secured the abolition of France's system of penal servitude, *le bagne*. In 1870 (as Julien Gracq pointed out), "the least of Mac-Mahon's troopers, leaving for Sedan, was aware of the military situation, of which the newspapers concealed nothing. In 1940, the blackout of people's minds was total. . . ." And that was despite the advent of the radio, to which everybody listened. As the doyen of American columnists, James Reston, wryly pointed out, the Irangate intrigues were going on in Washington under the noses of the major media, yet it took an obscure Middle Eastern publication to "break the story" and put them on the trail. Watergate and *Rainbow Warrior* were essentially newspaper affairs. The television stations, in the United States as in France, whether private or state-owned,

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simply followed suit—and not very promptly either. The audio-visual world has been added on to the world of the press; it has neither destroyed it nor replaced it; it has not even always outdone it in terms of impact. It is of a different order.

In what way does it differ? It is politicians who feel most intensely the pressures that increasing media coverage of their activities places, in the democratic context, on the exercise of responsibilities, on the reactions of the public, and even on the ability to act. A Michel Rocard and a Raymond Barre, whatever their dissensions on other matters, can agree in their descriptions of how the forced cold-shower of media exposure changes behaviour.

Doubly so for the additional presence of the opinion polls, which although valuable instruments of knowledge are also a permanent source of irritation, with their day-by-day influence on what a politician is going to say and do. Compare the primitive innocence possible in a pre-TV-era interview with a programme such as French television's *L'heure de vérité*, in which the "truth-teller" may become an involuntary liar, since every ten minutes he is bombarded with polls that are meant to reflect how public opinion is reacting to what he is saying. He no longer thinks about anything but the headline effect, and hardly at all about the actual content and eventual practical results of the policy he is putting forward. Michel Rocard has said so in a penetrating (and unusually heartfelt) analysis. He adds: "I have often seen this criterion govern the consideration of measures for anti-unemployment programmes or even of laws dealing with delinquency. . . ."

The primacy of the moment, the obligation to react immediately to every event, even when it raises serious and complicated problems, the impossibility of secrecy, even in delicate international affairs—all these factors relegate "the long-term perspective" to the background of reflection. At every fresh proposal from Mikhail Gorbachov, the reaction (or frequently, the discordant reactions) of the West must be forthcoming within 24 hours, without adequate consideration or possibility of revision, under penalty of appearing hesitant and unreliable. Gorbachov in fact plays shrewdly on the media-related constraints of our democracies. If the West considers, waits, declines to react immediately, that is already a reaction. It is "*froideur*", a cool, "reserved" reception, an eloquent "lack of enthusiasm". Even silence has a headline effect.

A domestic-policy measure may be unpopular when introduced, but beneficial in the long run. However, the "media rating" of the politician introducing it has little hope of collecting the long-term benefits, which may stretch over months or years, whereas it suffers a terrible blow on the day the measure is announced. For instance, a March 1984 study by the Institute for Applied Economics showed that the three main American networks failed to reflect the economic recovery achieved in 1983. Every austerity measure of the previous year had been noisily trumpeted and illustrated, but no one was able to learn from watching the news on television that unemployment in the United States had fallen, in the space of one year, from 10.7% to 8.4% of the employable population.

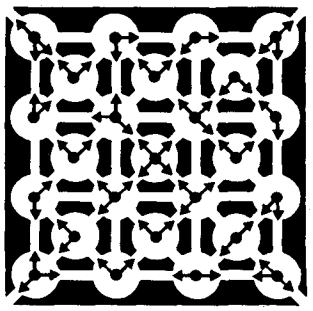
Apparently words count for more than deeds. That would explain why François Mitterrand, who as a *Président actif* had been the most unpopular head of state since the beginning of the Fifth Republic, has seen his popularity soar since "cohabitation" has permitted him to *parler sans agir*, say without doing. He is the first politician in any age to have succeeded in combining the advantages of power and those of opposition—the ideal stance as far as the media are concerned.

I note that Michel Rocard has taken his diagnosis further than Raymond Barre. The former Prime Minister inquires circumspectly: "Has the Fourth Estate perhaps become so powerful as to impair the normal working of the other three? . . ." But Rocard's conclusion is brutally frank: "The power of the media is today very much greater than political power." *Diable!* Fantasy? Paranoia? Yes, of course; to a great extent.

Many sociologists of communication (Dr Paul Lazarsfeld in the United States, Jean Cazeneuve and François de Closets in France) have demonstrated the partly illusory and mythical character of the dogma of "the magic screen". Myth or not, however, the French politicians believe in it; so does the French public; and so, even more, do the journalists of France's media.

That being so, the fundamental fact is that they have all adapted their behaviour to this mirage, which immediately makes it a reality.

The Demiurge State



Why, for example, has "vocational training" failed in France, yet succeeded in Germany? Because Germany allowed businesses to set up their own vocational-training colleges. France, on the other hand, took the decision that vocational training should remain in the *service public*, a part of the state education system. In so doing, it made it the poor relation and the dumping-ground of general secondary education. The Germans dealt with the problem in its concrete, practical aspects; the French approached it in terms of an interventionist, corporatist, bureaucratic logic.

And do you know why French industry has virtually disappeared from the machine-tool sector? Not through State neglect.

Quite the contrary: the State has poured millions into a series of "machine-tool plans". And poured them down the drain—through failure to study the non-economic causes of why we lag behind. What are they? Primarily the fact that French colleges of engineering are organised in such a way that mechanical engineers get shunted into a kind of siding,

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where they enjoy neither prestige or prospects. A single pragmatic element of educational reform would have been a thousand times less costly and a great deal more effective. It would once again have attracted the right kind of people into mechanical engineering. The State, however, is deaf to such subtle resonances.

It is little realistic touches like these that lend colour and movement to Michel Crozier's general arguments in *Etat modeste, Etat moderne*.[1] Overambitious, biting off more than it can chew, the State operates at a quantitative, abstract level, mistrustful of the qualitative needs of society and discouraging society's initiatives. It is not French society that is sick, as (according to Crozier) we too pessimistically assert; it is our State that is suffocating *us*.

But Michel Crozier subtly modifies and, at the same time, goes beyond other, over-abrupt critiques of the State. We can no longer, in his view, take it back to the "minimal" functions it exercised in the 19th century. The marriage of State and society has grown too intimate; divorce is now impossible. But that marriage affects too many realities for us to allow ourselves to stand back and watch it go wrong. A primitive, static society can tolerate an administrative system that is both cumbersome and chaotic—but not our modern societies, committed as they are to complexity and innovation. It must be added that the crisis in public administration is a global phenomenon. It is under indictment everywhere, despite the variety of institutional and bureaucratic structures. France is not alone in suffocating, although in France the State lags farther behind society than elsewhere in Western Europe.

The author of this apt and original work, which offers either a fresh concept or a fresh way of looking at things on every page, nevertheless invites one objection—and it undoubtedly has to do with his absolute confidence in society. For Rousseau, man is naturally good; it is society that corrupts him. For Crozier, society is naturally intelligent; it is the State that makes it stupid.

"It is never society that is wrong", he states without batting an eyelid. Indeed! He accounts for the strikes of late 1986 purely in terms of the government's "lack of understanding". That scarcely rings true. When the railwaymen went on strike, it was not because they had not been understood—it was because they had been understood too well! French Railways (the *SNCF*) cannot simultaneously enjoy shorter working-hours than the majority of European wage-earners, better pay and pensions, and dispensation from every notion of professional error—all without any obligation of *rentabilité*, profitability. There are some things that simply cannot go on for ever. In this case, I'm afraid it is society that is sick, as must happen every time it clings stubbornly to the illusion that resources can be distributed without having accrued.

For society is not wholly external to the State. It is also a mosaic of groups that have turned the strength of the State to account in order to wrest certain advantages from it at the expense of other groups. This curse, which Michel Crozier seems to me to underestimate, makes many sectors of society accomplices of the harmfulness of the State. What we saw failing in the recent French and Spanish strikes was not the action of *l'Etat sur la societé*, but the action of *l'Etat sur l'Etat*. The things the State seems powerless to modernise are the monsters of its own begetting: our national educational system, the National Scientific Research Centre (*CNRS*), the national Rail and Airline companies, the Social-Security system (in Britain, the National Health Service).

But, beyond these descriptions, which are always open to facts susceptible of altering them, Crozier's book is valuable for a profound thought: society changes of its own accord as soon as it feels the need to. More often than not, the State prevents it from doing so while persisting in pushing it in a direction in which it does not wish to go. In short, the true function of the State is not to change society. Politics needs to be desacralised.

> "Universal suffrage bestows the right to govern, but within the strict limits of arrangements among men; it cannot sanction either the right to change from one kind of society to another or even the right to change society as such. . . ."

The devastating myth of the demiurge State has led both Right and Left astray. Michel Crozier deserves our thanks for unmasking this imposture in so compelling a fashion. Every simpleton on the modern political scene has his "plan for society". It ought to be a reason for disqualification.

[1] *Etat modeste, Etat moderne*. By Michel Crozier. Fayard.

The Public Sector, & the Private

Many of the comments made in connection with the strikes in France of last winter grafted old material on to new. First there were the strikers' own comments about "a drop in purchasing power . . . poor working conditions . . . management's refusal to negotiate". Then we had Raymond Barre's remark about an "overdose of reforms" since March 1986. At the same time the President of the Republic was muttering, and the Socialist Party shouting from the rooftops, about "social injustice" and "the unfair distribution of sacrifice". And, finally, among the majority and even in the Jacques Chirac Cabinet there was talk of poor communication with social partners. One was reminded of the quip made around 1785 by the ultra-Royalist Vaublanc: "*En France, c'est toujours le chef de l'Etat et ses ministres qui renversent le gouvernement* (In France it is always the head of state and his ministers who overthrow the government)."

Vaublanc's words are quoted by Albert Mathiez in his

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recently reissued study of the French Revolution.[1] They occur in the chapter entitled "The Revolt of the Nobles", which deals with the way in which, towards the end of the *ancien régime*, the nobility as a whole reacted to the growing threat to its privileges by clinging to those privileges even more stubbornly. Believing that it was consolidating them, it succeeded in rendering them altogether intolerable. Albeit a far older precedent than some (May '68, for instance), it is possibly less dated. The winter's strikes appear to have been prompted not so much by an appetite for advance as by a fear of defeat.

Public-service employees, seeing themselves as proletarians, would be horrified at being likened to the nobles of the *ancien régime*. They see red whenever there is talk of their "privileges". But (as several opinion polls have already shown) the public no longer entirely shares their view. One of the few fringe benefits of this French crisis has been to inform us at least about the true situation of those employees; their salaries and bonuses; the hours they work a week, days per year, and years in a lifetime; their sick-pay and retirement terms; special perks, holidays, and social organisations; and the cost to the taxpayer of the colossal deficits.

"*Privilège*" is not necessarily synonymous with "*richesse*". My *Littré et Robert* dictionary defines it as "a special right granted to a category of individuals outside the common law". A millionaire's fortune may owe nothing to privilege of any kind, while a relatively modest wage-earner may enjoy advantages not enjoyed by other wage-earners possessing the same qualifications but doing more work. A common French expression for the rich, the "haves", is *les nantis*. But *les nantis* are not necessarily swimming in affluence; literally, they are simply "the secured", the holders of a guarantee, an asset, or a right that they cannot lose.

So there is no good reason for people to have been shocked when Raymond Barre applied the term to civil servants and other public employees. Their guarantee of employment indubitably places them outside the common law. Moreover, as they see it, all the other advantages of their special situation in the world of labour, their so-called "established" advantages, ought also to be subjected to a cast-iron guarantee, regardless of the economic situation. This again has been a constant feature of privilege throughout history: to its holders it is sacrosanct. But why should *le statut de la fonction publique*, the Public Office Law of 1946, merit an eternity that was denied to the rights of the feudal lord?

ANOTHER FEATURE has been resistance to "control". Just as the *ancien régime* abbot drew his "*bénéfice*" without either residing in his abbey or performing the functions relating to that benefice, so a head of "research" at the National Scientific Research Centre may draw his salary for 30 years without ever publishing a thing, neither a book nor a paper. Lecturers are now rejecting "appraisal" at universities, secondary-school teachers are refusing "inspection", and their primary-school colleagues are opposed to the *directeurs d'école*. In other words they want both the autonomy of a liberal profession and the absence of risk of public-service employment.

The very notion of professional competence is tending to disappear. In the wake of the train disasters of the summer of 1985 (with 94 dead and 1,000 casualties in three derailments, all due to "human error"), what did we see but the train-drivers staging an indefinite wildcat strike because the *SNCF* management had decided to adopt a new system of testing their knowledge and skills.

Hence their opposition to a proposed "pay grid" to be based partly on merit (a project, incidentally, that had been outlined in principle under the last Socialist government). Given the current climate in the public sector, it sounded like a full-scale attack on the Rights of Man. What was clear was that the impetus for rejection came not from the lower-paid but from a veritable labour aristocracy: the 21,000 drivers of the national rail network and the 3,249 drivers of the Paris transport authority (*RATP*). Yet another parallel with "the revolt of the nobles. . . ."

IT HAS BEEN repeatedly claimed that these were "grass-roots" strikes. If what is meant by that is that they did not originate with the unions, fair enough. But that is not to say that it truly emanated from *la base* in the sense of the vast majority of lower-paid workers. In fact it came from the 10% of employees with the highest qualifications and the thickest pay-packets.

Comparing them to the protesting students and secondary-school children was not much fairer. Granted, there was a common element in the refusal of *sélection*. But the students refused it very much at their own risk; they were not being paid by the taxpayer to run a vast state monopoly of vital importance to the national economy. As for the "overdose" diagnosed by Raymond Barre, it may exist elsewhere, but no draconian structural reforms have been imposed to my knowledge on the *SNCF*, the *RATP*, or the electricity and gas industries. It was merely a question of improving administration and productivity—as at Agence France-Presse, the scene of similar strikes last winter.

And it is not to this type of strike so much as to memories of May '68 that the sociologist Alain Touraine's interpretation applies. Touraine says the crisis stems from the fact that politics has too much to do with "the cult of the system" and not enough with "respect for those involved". If any phenomena obey a systemic logic it is these strikes triggered by minorities of élite workers who control the nerve centres of the monsters of "the technetronic society". The impression that one was dealing with impersonal systems was reinforced by the wooden statements of the young spokesmen of the "co-ordinating committee" with their strings of empty clichés.

No one, of course, can deny any wage-earner, whether in the public or in the private sector, the right to try to earn more while at the same time reducing his obligations. It is perfectly reasonable that the civil servant and the public-

[1] *La Révolution française*. By ALBERT MATHIEZ. Editions Denoël.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

service employee should, like anyone else, defend their interests. What is so astonishing in this case is the disproportion between the substance of the claims—some large, some not so large, but none of them fundamental—and the enormity of the blow to the community inflicted by the absolute weapon of the public-service strike. Even if it is shown that the soup was not hot enough, common law does not allow the husband to blast off at the cook with his loaded shotgun.

WHAT ABOUT "purchasing power"? It dropped for all Frenchmen and women in 1983 and 1984 and has been recovering slowly since. But wanting it to recover still further cannot be a justification for so savagely penalising society as a whole. Above all, it is not something that should be calculated solely on the basis of the monthly pay-slip. When an employee has 155 days off a year (i.e. five months' holiday), works 32 hours a week, and retires at fifty with 75% of his top salary plus *des fournitures gratuites*, his real income needs to be worked out by relating his total earnings to the number of hours worked during his active life. It then emerges that public-service employees have some of the highest incomes in France and throughout Europe. As for working conditions, no one is going to say these should not be improved. (It is scandalous, for instance, that with all the millions of francs it costs us the *SNCF* has been unable to offer its train crews less forbidding and uncomfortable accommodation on nights spent away from home.) But no one will ever achieve the miracle to which the *cheminots* appear to aspire, namely that a train-driver should eat all his meals at home and never work nights or Sundays.

Another remarkable thing has been how after each management climb-down the strikers, far from going back to work, have shifted their ground and issued fresh demands. The straightforward withdrawal—on New Year's Eve—of the proposed new salary grid (which until then the railwaymen's coordinating committee had been representing as the main point of friction) failed to bring the strike to an end. Reborn under other watchwords, it continued for almost a fortnight to the accompaniment of acts of sabotage and infringements of other people's freedom to work. What the coordinating committee called the management's "refusal to negotiate" was in fact their refusal to capitulate. But when the management does capitulate, it is still not enough. Among the electricity workers and in the *Métro* we have seen the same shifting scenario of claims, the same war of movement waged by the same relatively well-off staff-grades. Their objective seems to be not so much to win this or that individual victory as to make people aware, by bringing the nation to its knees, of the absolute power of the state monopolies.

BECAUSE THAT is where we should be looking for the underlying cause of these strikes. These are battles waged by the protected sector of the economy to prevent any challenge to its status. This is a preventive war, and it is directed much more against a future threat than against any current injustice. Think about it: for a long time almost all the severe, prolonged strikes have been in public-service industries and state monopolies.

Why? Because in the context of the great wave of denationalisation, privatisation, and increased recourse to competition that is sweeping the world, the public monopolies know full well that society is going to turn on them and demand what is becoming increasingly vital: namely that pay be brought into line with performance and competence. Our societies cannot continue much longer to entertain two sectors: one sector exposed to international competition, in which companies are in constant risk of going bankrupt and workers of losing their jobs; and, facing it, a protected sector whose companies are exempt from the requirements of competitiveness and productivity and whose wage-earners enjoy security of employment. The crowning injustice is that it is taxes paid by the former sector that plug the deficits of the latter. Pressure will steadily increase to force the protected sector to share the obligations of efficiency and adjustment to the market encumbent on the free sector. Consequently the public monopolies, which can hold society to ransom, respond with warning strikes every time an attempt is made to modernise them.

The message is clear: "See how powerful we are! We can paralyse the whole country, put a stop to all your day-to-day activities. You are at our mercy, so don't interfere with our constitutions. We reject the world of risk in which you live. It's up to you to find a way of feeding us all the same. . . ." The great battle of the next few years will be between forcing the public sector—in the interests of its own employees—to accept the same competitiveness as the private sector, and if it will not, privatising it as well.

HAVE YOU noticed? Nowadays, whenever we in the West wish to praise a Communist leader we extol his determination to give sclerotic collectivism a transfusion of the fresh blood of the market economy, be it in Moscow, Peking, or Budapest.

"What a liberal!" we cry ecstatically. "He is reintroducing competition, the primacy of efficiency, pay according to merit, promotion according to zeal and application! What a clever man!" So clever, indeed, that we poor capitalists would not at all mind having a bit of this new-style Marxism-Leninism. Why should what is true on the other side of the Iron Curtain be false on this side?

J.-F.R.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Have you discovered the

Literary Review

?

Britain's liveliest and most unpredictable publication has more than quadrupled its subscribers in under a year. Now edited by Auberon Waugh, and running to 64 pages an issue, it is still unobtainable in many parts of the country. Although the cover price is £1.40 you can secure early copies by post every month for only £15.00 a year in the United Kingdom.

The *Literary Review* has no axe to grind, it represents no particular group and receives no subsidy from the Arts Council. It will print anything, however bizarre or objectionable, provided it is well written, intelligent and honest. It is now compulsory reading for anyone who wishes to know what is happening to the English language in the world of letters.

Those who have never seen the new *Literary Review* may write for a free copy to 51 Beak Street, London W1R 3LF — but only if they live in the United Kingdom. Those living further afield will have to ask their British friends about us — or simply take a gamble and subscribe at the foreign rates. Good luck.

Auberon Waugh

I wish to subscribe to the *Literary Review* and enclose a cheque/postal order for £15.00 (UK)/ £20.00 (Europe)/£35.00 (Airmail outside Europe)

Please debit my Access/VISA/American Express card number

Signature_____ **Date card expires**_____

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____ **Post Code**_____

LITERARY REVIEW 51 BEAK STREET LONDON W1R 3LF

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Special Book Section

Politics & World Affairs

Follow My Leader

The Great Walls of China—By LYNN PAN

HISTORY HAS provided the Chinese with more opportunities than most people for inflicting large-scale atrocities on themselves. To the question of which comes first—the Chinese appetite for despotism, or the political system which exercises that despotism—you can give no answer, one way or the other, which can't be countered by an opposite, and equally one-sided, answer. Cultural personality and political form are inseparably linked, and you can no more have the Great Leader Mao Zedong without the Sons of Heaven (all those Chinese emperors who had gone before) than you can have the chicken without the egg.

Whatever else might be said of him, there is no denying that Mao was the great man of the age. And the great man of the age, as Hegel tells us:

> ". . . is the one who can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what its will is, and accomplish it. What he does is the heart and essence of his age; he actualises his age."

If the Cultural Revolution had merely been the creation of a single individual, it would never have lasted ten years, or have wreaked so much havoc in the lives of so many. Revolution always draws into its train people who are working out their own private sicknesses and grievances, and today many Chinese realise how strong were the social impulses and personal frustrations of which Mao had been the expression. The periodic ideological campaigns reaching a climax in the Cultural Revolution were triggers to set off ever-present reserves of anger and hatred.

The Chinese Communist Party was keen enough to promote the idea that the roots of the Cultural Revolution lay in the Chinese themselves, in case it was thought that it was an inevitable consequence of the socialist system. When it pronounced on the Cultural Revolution in 1981, it carefully linked Mao's despotism with what it called China's "feudal autocracy", to dispose of any suggestion that it might have been based on Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism.

The Chinese masses, as always, fell for it. Writers began to talk of the deep-rooted flaws in the national character. "We have seen the enemy", they say, "and he is us." There began a movement to assess the Cultural Revolution, hitherto examined only in political terms, by qualities of human conscience and inherited behaviour. This chimed with the thinking of at least two émigré Chinese authors, whose books on this theme have become bestsellers.

The first of these works, *Zhongguo wenhua de shenceng jiegou* (*The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture*), was published in 1983 by Sun Longji, a Hong Kong-born Chinese who now teaches at a university in the United States. It is an untidy book, constantly betraying its origin as a series of newspaper articles. But it is of horrifying interest; not since the illustrious Lu Xun (1881-1936) has any writer taken such a hard look at the Chinese make-up.

Understanding Chinese culture, Sun suggests, can begin with one word: *ren*. *Ren* is a fundamental Confucian concept, roughly translatable as "humanity". To Chinese eyes, much of the word's significance lies in the way it is written: the character is formed by combining the ideogram for "man" with the ideogram for "two". The character encodes a built-in bias against individuality, and it is Sun Longji's contention that it is impossible for a Chinese to feel himself a man except in relation to another human being. A Chinese is only conscious of himself as a member of a family, race, or people; and it is only in the web of reciprocal relations woven between himself and others that he defines himself. He can have no identity apart from his group, his collective; and whoever goes it alone does so at the risk of social opprobrium. In Chinese society, the loner is a pariah.

The web of social obligations surrounding the Chinese individual, Sun says, is a womb, sheltering the Chinese self—"a permanently disorganised" entity—from the demands which independence and adulthood might have made on it. Sun agrees with Lu Xun that "True manhood has not yet been created in the Chinese world". A man remains in a psychologically dependent position long after he has arrived at physical maturity; and just as deep reverence for parents, particularly the father, is insisted on, so unquestioning acquiescence to the dictates of the ruler is expected of him. This makes him ideal material for authoritarian rule; and through-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

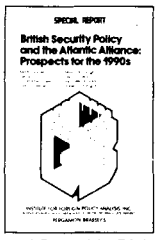
NEW PUBLICATIONS ON WORLD AFFAIRS

Selling the Rope to Hang Capitalism? The Debate on West-East Trade and Technology Transfer. Edited by Charles M. Perry and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 1987. 247pp. $28.00 (approx.) ISBN 0-08-034959-5 (hardcover).

Twenty-two experts from the Reagan Administration, the Congress, government agencies, and the academic and business communities address the strategic dimensions of technology transfer from the West to the Soviet Union. Topics range from Soviet legal and clandestine acquisition methods and the benefits of technology transfer for Soviet military R&D, to U.S. export controls and CoCom, technology transfer to China, and NATO and business perspectives on export controls and trade with the Soviet bloc. Contributors include Richard N. Perle, John P. Hardt, Marshall I. Goldman, William Schneider, Jr., Victor Basiuk, John R. Thomas, Denis Fred Simon, and Henry R. Nau.

The USSR Today and Tomorrow: Problems and Challenges. Edited by Uri Ra'anan and Charles M. Perry. 1987. x, 140pp. $10.95. ISBN 0-669-16465-8.

This major new collection of studies by leading Soviet experts examines the strengths and weaknesses of the USSR, the potential for "reform" under Gorbachev, and the likely shape of the Soviet challenge over the next ten years. This volume explores the best and newest approaches to the craft of Sovietology, and applies these techniques to policy issues and problems of enduring concern—e.g., Soviet leadership struggles, economic and social trends, the role of arms control in Soviet strategy, and future directions in Soviet-American relations. In addition to the editors, the contributors include Richard Pipes, Marshall Goldman, Adam Ulam, Robert Conquest, Richard Shultz, Jacquelyn Davis, John Roche, David Powell, Igor Lukes, and Michael Voslensky.



British Security Policy and the Atlantic Alliance: Prospects for the 1990s. By Martin Holmes, Gerald Frost, Christopher Coker, David Greenwood, Mark D. W. Edington, Dean Godson, Jacquelyn K. Davis, and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 1987. xvii, 133pp. ISBN 0-08-035966-3.

Once characterized by a stable and predictable approach to world affairs and national security policy, the defense debate in British politics has in recent years reflected the deterioration of this consensus and the increasing polarization of contending perspectives on British security needs. The papers in this monograph address a number of constraints and influences which will shape Britain's security policy. Political, economic, and strategic factors are assessed, along with public attitudes, force structure requirements, and the evolving domestic political environment. Finally, likely trends in British foreign and security policy are examined in terms of their implications for U.S. planning and the future of NATO.

Forthcoming

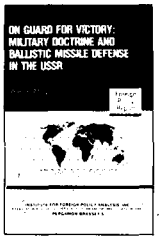
The Grenada Documents: Window on Totalitarianism. By Nicholas Dujmovic. 1987. Apprx. 85pp. ISBN 0-08-035969-8.

When U.S. forces liberated Grenada, they seized a document archive, unequaled in its scope and depth as a record of the progression of a Marxist-Leninist party from insurgent movement to governing power. Based on an extensive examination of these documents, the author traces the growth of the movement from its origins as a small-scale, Marxist-Leninist rejectionist front to a political force able to exert political control over the people of Grenada and their economy. He also provides a comprehensive analysis of the activities of Grenada's New Jewel movement, and assesses the lessons learned from the Grenadian experience and their implications for U.S. hemispheric policy.

Orders for the book, *The USSR Today and Tomorrow,* may be sent to IFPA. Orders for the other books may be addressed to Pergamon-Brassey's, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford, OX3 0BW, England, or to the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 675 Massachusetts Avenue, 10th Floor, Dept. E-2, Cambridge, MA 02139-3396, USA. On orders to IFPA, please include payment, plus postage and handling charges (to addresses in U.S. and Canada, $1.00 per book; all other countries, $2.00 per book)

Nicaragua v. United States: A Look at the Facts. By Robert F. Turner. 1987. 175pp. (approx.) $9.95. ISBN 0-08-034499-2.

In 1984 the Nicaraguan government brought suit before the International Court of Justice against the United States, alleging various violations of international law in connection with U.S. support for armed insurgents known as the Contras. Against the recommendations of the author of this study, a lawyer and former State Department official, the United States decided not to take part in the consideration of the case on the merits. This study—which was cited in draft form in one of the opinions to the World Court case—presents some of the evidence which led the author to conclude that the United States could have won the case on the merits. This carefully documented volume provides a wealth of factual information to help readers understand the nature of the conflict in Central America and the importance of an effective response to deter Nicaraguan aggression.



On Guard for Victory: Military Doctrine and Ballistic Missile Defense in the USSR. By Steven P. Adragna. 1987. xiv, 86pp. $9.95. ISBN 0-08-035965-5.

An informed assessment of the potential benefits offered by the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative to Western security must take account of the way in which Soviet military planners and strategists view strategic defense. This study identifies profound differences in the evolution of Soviet and American thought on these issues, and explores the double standard which characterizes Moscow's frequent declarations on the strategic defense efforts of the two countries. This study enumerates a variety of potential policy options available to the Soviet Union in continuing its own strategic defense program while attempting to hinder U.S. progress in this area, and offers an assessment of which alternatives are likely to be pursued by the Soviet leadership.

IFPA

Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc.
in association with The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out history the social role of the Chinese official has at once been that of governor, administrator, patriarch, and nanny.

Sun Longji notes that something in their culture stops the Chinese from becoming full-blown individuals, but he does not really elucidate the sources of this stagnation. We know that individualisation is intrinsic to the modernising process, helped in the West by such factors as the Christian tradition, which made possible the growth of a highly sophisticated conception of individual rights. Of the two obvious things which the West has, and China lacks, one is modernity; and as long as contemporary progress eludes the Chinese, the all-embracing communities which used to sustain the individual in premodern societies will remain strong. The other difference is that in China people are deprived of individual rights in the name of the collectivity. The chances of individualism making much headway in Chinese life are thus doubly undermined—by underdevelopment and its concomitant, traditionalism; and by the collectivism of Communist social arrangements and the apparatus of repression.

Western Sinologists have been debating for some time whether contemporary China was "more Chinese" or "more Communist". It is difficult enough to distinguish in Chinese society that which derives from Communism as such and that which arises from Confucian tradition. Add to this the complicating effects of underdevelopment, and what remains to us is only guesses. Individualisation and modernisation go hand in hand, and condition one another. It would have been unnecessary to dwell on this well-known relationship but for the fact that it has been neglected in the current debate over the Chinese national character.

THE OTHER CHINESE BESTSELLER on this subject is Bo Yang's essay "The Ugly Chinaman" ("*Choulou de Zhongguoren*"), published in book form with a selection of his writings and readers' letters in Taiwan, and reproduced in an abridged version in a national periodical in the People's Republic. As a writer who has lived in both China and Taiwan, Bo Yang is well-placed to observe the Chinese cultural syndrome. He pulls no punches when it comes to saying what he thinks of politicians, whether Kuomintang or Communist; and he has been in bad odour with both the régime in Taiwan (where he had been jailed for ten years on charges of "defaming the leadership" and "complicity with the Communists") and the régime in Peking (where "The Ugly Chinaman" has been banned).

Confucius, says Bo Yang, was the only great thinker China has succeeded in producing. In the two-and-a-half millennia since the great man's death, the minds of the literati have been stuck "on the bottom of an intellectually stagnant pond, the soy-sauce vat of Chinese culture". As the contents of this vat began to putrefy, he goes on to say, "the resultant stench was absorbed by the Chinese people". Although he is a considerable historian, Bo Yang's voice in this essay is that of a polemicist, simultaneously exasperated and pained by his own people, who seem to him to be incapable of national self-renewal—forever at odds with one another, and constantly shrinking from unwelcome facts about themselves.

TRANSLATED EXCERPTS of both *The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture* and "The Ugly Chinaman" are included in *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*,[1] an anthology conjuring the shade of Lu Xun, who once said that it was the destiny of writers, in an age of revolution, "to witness the inconsistency between ideal and reality"; but that "As long as there shall be stones, the seeds of fire will not die."

The anthology is something of a mixed bag, of poetry, fiction, drama, literary and film criticism, commentary, and even cartoons. Very little of it, it must be said at once, is of any artistic value, or good enough to stand by itself, and the anthology's chief recommendation is that it is a compelling social document, taking us inside the life of "unofficial" China.

Of course literature ought to be more than that, but the main interest of the pieces in this collection lies in their subject matter, not manner; in their content, not form. Indeed, Liu Xiaobo, who is about the only literary critic worth listening to in China, has pronounced all Chinese literature since 1949 to be worthless. That most contemporary Chinese writing is poor art has clearly been a problem for the editors, who have had to include pieces they obviously don't admire. But whether or not the material has any literary merit is almost beside the point in this collection, the chief concerns of which are Chinese culture and political oppression.

The first of the chapter headings is "Walls". The Chinese like to build walls—around their kingdom, around their homes, around their workplaces, around their minds. A wall provides them with a resistance which helps them to define themselves, but it also confines them, hems them in. "When", Lu Xun once asked, "will we stop adding new bricks to the Great Wall . . . that wonder and that curse?" The answer is that, if anything, the walling up has intensified since Lu Xun's day. It is not only that the Chinese Communist Party periodically closes the country off against what it currently calls "bourgeois liberalism"; but that large numbers of labour camps, prisons, labour-reform farms, and re-education centres have been created to seclude people from the outside world.

A three-metre wall, topped by electrified barbed wire, surrounds Q1, China's pre-eminent maximum-security prison for political offenders in the picturesque outskirts of Peking. We are given a chilling portrait of it by Wei Jingsheng, perhaps China's most famous dissident, who is now serving the rest of his fifteen-year sentence, it is rumoured, in faraway Qinghai province. His crime was to pronounce Mao Zedong "a bloody tyrant", to declare that "we want no more gods and emperors", and to argue that what China needed, if it was to succeed in its Four Modernisations, was a fifth, political modernisation, founded on human rights and democracy.

By all accounts Wei Jingsheng's mental health is deteriorating, so much so that he has had to receive psychiatric treat-

[1] *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*. Edited by GEREMIE BARMÉ and JOHN MINFORD. Far Eastern Economic Review (GPO Box 60, Hong Kong), no price given.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment at a hospital. A mental institution is what lies behind the walls of "13 Happiness Street", the name of a Kafkaesque short story with which the anthology begins. The story is by the poet Bei Dao, whose novella, *Waves*, has recently appeared in an English translation, along with a selection of his short stories.[2] Braving a subjective view of the Cultural Revolution, *Waves* presents a world gone mad; a place where, as one of the characters puts it, one is glad to be a lunatic. Lives are stubbed out as casually as a cigarette. The heroine, who saw her mother fall off a balcony in a raid by the Red Guards, is the victim of a profound shock. Her chance of happiness with the hero is destroyed by people who resolve the inconvenient greyness of the world into an orthodox black-and-white.

The themes of *Waves* are compelling, however much the genuine feeling might seem mixed with sentimental elements. There is no doubt that Bei Dao is true to the emotions of "the lost generation", those people who feel their youth to have been wasted by the Cultural Revolution. When they might have been studying or training for a career, these youngsters were sent away from their city homes to make their lives in the villages. The rustication policy was partly promoted by overcrowding and unemployment in the cities, and partly by the need to settle the undeveloped frontier regions—particularly Chinese Turkestan and the "great northern wastes" of Manchuria—with an educated population. The countryside became the Chinese equivalent of Botany Bay, a dumping ground for political undesirables or the offspring of former capitalists or other suspect categories.

To persuade school-leavers in the cities to "volunteer" for the backwoods, the authorities resorted to coercion, harassment, and deception. Millions of teenagers left for the countryside with the rosy picture of rural life which the authorities had painted of it; the spectacular culture shock they suffered when they were confronted with the reality was to mark them for life. Not altogether surprisingly, it is from the ranks of these rusticated youths, the majority of whom were allowed to return to their home cities after the death of Mao in 1976, that the dissidents and the new generation of writers, poets and artists, to whom *Seeds of Fire* introduces us, have largely sprung.

The experience of many of these youngsters was no different from that of prisoners undergoing "reform through labour" in what can only be called the Chinese Gulag. An extract from an Amnesty International report names some of the large numbers of penal farms and camps scattered across the country, while a piece by a young writer, Wu Huan, recalls what it was like to be an inmate in one of these places:

> "In this environment crazed screams and shouts have an endearing familiarity; clipped and violent curses become the language of binding friendship. . . . Here too entertainment is of a different order; frenzied fights and frustrated beatings; wash basins thrown over bedding; rice bowls hurled angrily at the heated walls; a padded shoe

[2] *Waves*. By Bei Dao. Translated by Susette Cooke and Bonnie S. McDougall. Heinemann, £11.95.

Public service labour relations: Recent trends and future prospects

by T. Treu et al

This study explores the characteristics of labour relations in public service employment in France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, the U.K. and the U.S. It analyses the developments that have taken place in trade unionism, methods for determining conditions of employment, labour disputes and their settlement, and strikes in the public service, and goes on to highlight issues that are liable to be on the labour relations agenda for some time to come.
ISBN 92-2-106049-7 **£14.30**

Managing change in British industry

by M. Sharp and G. Shepherd with a contribution by D. Marsden

The decline of British industry and the related unemployment have no single cause. However, in recent years new strategies have been adopted and industry is showing signs of competitive response, and productivity and flexibility have increased considerably. Nevertheless, the country is adjusting more slowly than others, and consequently, may find itself between the innovative capacity of advanced industrialised countries and the low wages of newly industrialising ones. This study examines how Britain is adjusting patterns of production.
ISBN 92-2-106154-X *(In preparation)*

World Labour Report

Volume 3

This new volume in the series addressing key labour issues takes as its theme "incomes from work: between equity and efficiency". It analyses recent trends in employment, labour relations, social security and training for skills, and reviews the broad trends affecting the income of workers, whether self-employed or employed, and attempts to explain. It will be useful for those needing up-to-date information on the world of work.
ISBN 92-2-105951-0 **£17.60**

Already available:

Volume 1: covers trends and problems in employment, social security and the impact of technology, and more.
ISBN 92-2-103604-9 **£19.80**

Volume 2: covers labour relations, conditions of work, training and more.
ISBN 92-2-103848-3 **£19.80**

Radiation protection of workers (ionising radiations)

An ILO code of practice

Since ionising radiations are found in an increasing number of work situations the protection of workers has become urgent. This practical guide, whose provisions may be adapted to local conditions, covers duties and responsibilities; notification, registration and licensing; classification of workers, work areas and working conditions: limitation of radiation exposure (in normal and abnormal conditions); and the radiation protection programme. A glossary of terms is also included.
ISBN 92-2-105996-6 **£6.60**

Human stress, work and job satisfaction: A critical approach

by T. M. Fraser

This monograph is concerned with man in his working environment, and as such touches on the disciplines of physiology, psychology, sociology, ergonomics, clinical medicine and systems engineering. "An excellent summary of the total stress at work problem and its related theories" (*British Health and Safety Society Reviews Bulletin*, Birmingham).
ISBN 92-2-103042-3 **£6.60**

Access and Visa cards accepted

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE
Branch Office
96/98 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4LY
Tel: 01-828 6401

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chucked on a stove; a fellow playfully taking off his pants and wearing them on his head.

As for the life of the spirit: apart from a few books on philosophy that no one could make anything of—nothing."

Perhaps because it came out too late to be excerpted, Nien Cheng's account of her imprisonment in the No. 1 Detention Centre in Shanghai during the Cultural Revolution[3] is not included in this anthology. This is a pity, because no one has more movingly portrayed Chinese prison life than this brave Shanghainese woman wrongly accused of spying for Britain. What she also portrays, with the exactness of total recall, is a world where one is enclosed on all sides by walls of vigilant ears and eyes, where the informer thrives, and where the *greatest chances of survival belong to the craftiest.*

Finding herself faced with vicious Red Guards and power-drunk Party officials, she developed a stubborn defiance that must have been both impressive and infuriating to observe. Her crime was that she had dared to live well; for this audacity, she must be denounced and brought down to the level of the masses. It was not by their deeds but by the acreage of land once owned by their parents and ancestors that the accused were judged in Mao's China. And because a top leader, widely believed to have been Mao Zedong himself, had casually put the number of class enemies at 5% of the population, it became the practice in every organisation—accustomed by years of central planning to producing an exact, desired quota of outputs—to find one in every twenty of its members guilty of political crime or heresy, so as to meet or to surpass the target. Even before Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution, the way had been opened for arbitrary power.

THESE DAYS the Chinese man in the street thinks nothing of comparing the Cultural Revolution with the Nazi Holocaust, but in his new book, *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985*,[4] the redoubtable John King Fairbank points out that the Nazis' genocide had relatively identifiable targets whereas the Cultural Revolution fell upon shifting targets and used *ad hoc* methods. In some ways the Chinese exercise was worse, because "where the Nazi programme was planned and systematic", the Cultural Revolution was "improvised and sporadic". Roles could reverse with each abrupt fluctuation of policy; the persecutor could suddenly become the persecuted, the torturer the tortured.

The Cultural Revolution, Fairbank observes, was a "settling of accounts on a cosmic scale". The systematic cruelty of the denunciation sessions had its roots in the peasant barbarity of village feuds and risings; and although the Red Guards were urban teenagers, not peasants, they nevertheless acted in the peasant tradition that Mao exalted. All too often the violence was accepted, even abetted, by the spectators; and nothing epitomises the blind Chinese obedience to authority more absolutely than this passivity in the face of brutality. It is the "go-along" behaviour, Fairbank suggests, and the sadistic satisfaction over another's misery, which Mao's revolution organised on a massive public scale. No other people showed a greater propensity to follow the leader, for example, than the millions of docile farmers who rushed to answer Mao's call to set up backyard steel factories during the height of the disastrous Great Leap Forward.

In refusing to make a false confession, Nien Cheng had not behaved like the wise Chinese who "bends with the wind to survive the hurricane". This is why, when a friend asked her after her release why she had been imprisoned, and she replied that it was because she had been accused of being a spy of the imperialists, he told her:

> "No, you were locked up because you don't understand China. I think you had better learn quickly. You have so many old-fashioned ideas about what's legal and what's illegal. . . ."

It was no good subscribing to abstract principles in a society where notions of the rule of law, of individual rights, were altogether missing.

This, Fairbank reminds us, has long been so; the old China was governed by ethics more than by law. In the present-day socialist régime, Fairbank detects many family resemblances to earlier dynasties, and his account of the transformations which China underwent between 1800 and 1985 has as its motif the continuing influence of the 3,000 years of Chinese history. This historical continuity—China is the world's oldest surviving universal empire—poses a problem for revolution and modernisation, which are both struggles to break the grip of the past.

TO PURSUE MODERNITY is of course to pursue economic growth. While Fairbank constantly plucks us back to the world of imperial China, Professor Carl Riskin, in his detailed study of the political economy of China to 1985,[5] shows us how much its features are owed to the Soviet Union and to Stalinism. And the developmental experience of China since the late 1970s, when Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reforms and *glasnost*, will be familiar to everybody in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and, increasingly, Gorbachov's USSR.

There is much meat in Riskin's study. Not only does it lead the reader through the maze of policies by which the Chinese Communist régime has sought economic growth since 1949, it also explains the intense, and sometimes violent, struggles over those policies in the central leadership. After decades of zigzagging between rigid centralism and chaotic administrative decentralisation, China's economic policies now revolve around the issue of Marx versus market. To transform the economic structure is to transform the Communist State itself; to introduce market laws and competition into socialism is to reduce the control of the Party. Hardly surprisingly,

---

[3] *Life and Death in Shanghai.* By NIEN CHENG. Grafton Books, £12.95, paper £3.95.

[4] *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985.* By JOHN KING FAIRBANK. Chatto & Windus, £25.00.

[5] *China's Political Economy: The Quest for Development since 1949.* By CARL RISKIN. Oxford University Press, £35.00, paper £12.00.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW TITLES FROM THE IEDSS

THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT
Dialogue or Delusion?
Jonathan Luxmoore
"Comprehensive and stimulating"– SOVIET ANALYST
"Well-reasoned and sober" – Baroness Cox
in the *HOUSE OF LORDS*

MALTA ON THE BRINK
From Western Democracy to Libyan Satellite
Enzo Rossi
"Well-written...masterly...an important contribution"
– SUNDAY TIMES, Malta
"Compact and incisive"– FREEDOM AT ISSUE

THE SPETSNAZ THREAT
Can Britain be Defended?
Michael Hickey
"Topical and important"– ARMED FORCES
"Of special importance"– GUNS REVIEW
"Yet another horrible exposure"– MOSCOW RADIO

PRESERVING THE DETERRENT
A Missile Defence for Europe
Michael Rühle
"Densely argued...merits attention"–
BRITISH ARMY REVIEW
"A useful study"– BAC NEWS

LIABILITY OR ASSET?
A Policy for the Falkland Islands
Robert Miller
"Well-reasoned food for thought"–
BRITISH ARMY REVIEW

THE NEUTRALIST TENDENCY
Defence and the Left in Britain and Germany
Geoffrey Lee Williams
"Authoritative and compelling"–
THE SALISBURY REVIEW
"Cogent...deserves a wide readership"–
BRITISH ARMY REVIEW

Just published!

TERRORIST OR FREEDOM FIGHTER?
The Cost of Confusion
William McGurn

MOSCOW'S AFGHAN WAR
Soviet Motives and Western Interests
Radek Sikorski

THE NEW CITY REPUBLICS
Local Government and Defence
David Regan

CENTRAL AMERICA
Can Europe Play a Part?
Hugh Thomas

ARMS CONTROL
Has the West Lost Its Way?
Robin Brown

NON-OFFENSIVE DEFENCE
Unmasking a Myth
David Gates

Single Issues
£4.50 (UK/Europe) $8.00 (USA)
£5.00 (Other countries)
Includes postage and packing

Subscriptions
£32.00 (UK/Europe) $50.00 (USA)
£36.00 (Other countries)
Includes postage and packing

...and a special publication

NO END OF A LESSON
Leading Articles from The Times
Charles Douglas-Home
Hardback. 191pp. Price £7.50 (postage extra outside UK)
"Valuable reading...deserves wide attention"– NATIONAL REVIEW
"A valuable collection" – Enoch Powell in *THE TIMES*
"A tribute to a talented journalist and courageous man"– CHURCH TIMES
"Genuinely worthy of a wider audience"– THE SPECTATOR
"Remarkable"– THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
"A pleasure to read"– BRITISH ARMY REVIEW
"A trenchant and honourable tribute"– ENCOUNTER
"Fascinating, provocative reading"– THE TABLET
"A special tribute"– BRITISH BOOK NEWS

The Institute for European Defence & Strategic Studies
13-14 Golden Square, London W1R 3AG
Telephone: 01-439 8719
Telex: 263885 HOTTEA Telefax: 01-439 2034

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the reformists find themselves opposed by the so-called conservatives, people who stand for supreme Party authority and for the obedience of the masses. To the conservatives, the capitalist law of the jungle, the demand for individual liberty, the emergence of independent thinking challenging the dictates of the Party, all spell one thing—*luan* ("disorder"), the object of Chinese fears throughout the ages. The antidote to *luan*, for today's Party leaders no less than for the emperors of old, is the unity imposed by central authority.

DENG XIAOPING'S PLANS for China call for infusions of foreign capital, and some of this is coming to the country in the form of package tourists. In a book by *Der Spiegel*'s correspondent Tiziano Terzani,[6] we read that the Shaolin Monastery, ancient home of Zen Buddhism and a defensive martial art called Shaolin boxing, has had a rash of tourist hotels and a Friendship Store selling Coca-Cola added to it. The monastery was also where the first kungfu movie ever to be made in the People's Republic was partly shot. One of the characters in the film, a kungfu virtuoso nicknamed "Iron Fist", became the teacher of Mark Salzman, a young American martial arts enthusiast who taught English at the Hunan Medical School in Changsha and has written an engaging book about his two years there.[7]

A martial arts routine, skilfully executed, is a hypnotic succession of leap, bob, twist and spin—complicated, in some styles, by knives, spears, halberds and hooks. Both master and disciple were relentless seekers after perfection. Once, after Salzman had knocked himself out practising, his Chinese master remarked approvingly: "Sweating and bleeding. Good."

Salzman's anecdotes about his friends, pupils and teachers appear as smidgens of flavouring, evocative drops from the old Chinese essence bottle. In one telling story, his young calligraphy master Hai Bin twisted his face into a grimace when he saw an exhibition of Chinese calligraphy by a well-known Frenchman studying in Shanghai. The brushwork, executed in a free-form, abstract style, showed a liberty of manner which so offended his Chinese taste that he wanted to see no more of it. "This is so-called freedom", said Hai Bin, displaying true disgust.

"*Luan*", he must have added to himself.

[6] *Behind the Forbidden Door: China Inside Out.* By TIZIANO TERZANI. Counterpoint (Unwin Paperbacks), £3.95.

[7] *Iron and Silk.* By MARK SALZMAN. Hamish Hamilton, £10.95.

Disproving Darwin?

On Nixon & Reagan—By VERNON BOGDANOR

"WE ARE", said Billy Graham in 1960, "electing a President of the World."[1] The President of the United States has become a figure of awesome power and authority, someone to be taken account of even by those opposed to everything for which America stands. When Hitler invited Molotov to Berlin in 1940, Stalin made sure that the meeting did not take place until after the presidential election; Hitler told Mussolini, in November 1940, that Italy's attack on Greece should not have been undertaken before the election. Woodrow Wilson was the first American President who sought to convince non-Americans that the United States was less a place than an idea; the first President who, as it were, sought a constituency in Europe as well as America; and, since Wilson, Presidents such as Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy could have stood for the presidency of Europe, and perhaps of other parts of the world also, with a fair chance of success. Even Richard Nixon, a politician to whom the American people never gave their love, discovered on an unannounced visit to Warsaw in 1958 that hundreds of thousands of Poles were turning out to cry "Long live America!", "Long live Eisenhower!", "Long live Nixon!", "May you live a thousand years!"

No matter that, in the aftermath of Watergate and Viet Nam, the "Imperial Presidency" has been circumscribed—not very effectively, as the Irangate hearings show—by formal restrictions. For, as the election of Ronald Reagan indicates, even those conservatives who favour drastic limitations upon the scope of federal power still look to the presidency, just as Americans did in the time of FDR, as the moral focus of the nation, a "bully pulpit" in Theodore Roosevelt's famous phrase; and the democracies of Western Europe remain unable to manage their defences without American leadership, however much they may resent the fact.

Yet the President himself, the individual who becomes the repository of so many hopes and fears, is selected by means of an electoral process which would seem almost designed to exclude anyone actually capable of governing the United States effectively. The machinery for identifying and nominating presidential candidates seems quite unrelated to the fearsome

[1] Cited in Hedley Donovan, *Roosevelt to Reagan: A Reporter's Encounters with Nine Presidents* (Harper & Row, New York, 1985), pp. 73-74.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

responsibilities of the office. In the 1870s, Henry Adams declared that the evolution of the presidency from Washington to Grant was itself sufficient to disprove Darwin; by 1984, many Americans were asking themselves whether Reagan and Mondale were the best that a highly literate democratic society of over 230 million people could offer as examples of political leadership.

The discrepancy between the needs of the office and the personalities of those who fill it is often ascribed to the demands of democratic politics or, more precisely, to the peculiar machinery of American democratic politics. For the United States, a continent rather than a country, is far from being a paradigm democracy; its democratic machinery is unique and has not been replicated with success in any other country. In no other major democracy are the ties of party so weak or the contest for power so gruelling. In no other major democracy does the recruitment process allow its chief executive to come to power with so little experience of the problems with which he will have to deal, and especially with so little experience of foreign affairs. The electoral reforms, originally espoused by the Progressive movement at the turn of the century, designed to take power away from party organisations and city bosses, have had the effect of dissociating the recruitment process from the requirements of government itself.

IT IS A PARADOX that the processes of democratisation—carried further in the United States than in any other country, with the exception of Switzerland—have served to limit, rather than to enhance, the extent of choice available to the American electorate. More paradoxical still, the rise of populism, the urge to weaken those intermediate institutions lying between President and people—parties, legislature, and pressure groups—has led to more, not less, emotional dependence upon the man who occupies the apex of power.

> "The growing complexity of the problems we face at home and abroad, and the heavy emotional content of these problems, make the moral leadership of the President more and more often the crucial factor. Or, putting it negatively: If we don't have real moral authority in the Presidency, more things can go wrong, and more seriously wrong than ever before. . . . Our American system has come to require an almost mystical union . . . .[2]

The people, though in theory emancipated and free, desperately need an elective monarch to give shape and form to their political aspirations; yet the nature of the American political system is such that the emergence of this paragon becomes more and more unlikely. Dwight Eisenhower was the last American President to leave office with the American people more contented at the end of his reign than they had been at its beginning. Thus, no one under 45 in the United States has actually experienced as an adult a wholly successful presidency. Should the expectations of the American people be changed, or does the fault lie in the system?

If the processes of American democracy seem to militate against the possibility of fulfilling the dreams of the American electorate, the smokescreen of public relations which surrounds modern American political leaders makes it difficult for the voter to judge them as they really are. Franklin Roosevelt, offered to the American people in 1944 as a wise and far-sighted chief executive, was in reality, it is now known, a dying man, who found it difficult to remain awake during important meetings, and survived only three months of his fourth term. John Kennedy, presented to the public in 1960 as a vigorous and energetic presidential candidate, was suffering from severe back pain as well as Addison's disease needing daily cortisone treatment, and was far from the loving husband and devoted family man portrayed by his campaign advisers. Jimmy Carter, crafted by his image-makers as a pious and gentle Sunday-school teacher, was, it now appears, possessed of a spirit angry, vindictive, and mean. How, amidst the mountain of pap created by the political consultants and campaign managers, is the biographer to find his way?

The biographers of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan have at least this advantage: that their subjects have apparently defied the attempts of even the most skilful and sophisticated of image-makers. Ronald Reagan seems, although it is too early to make a considered judgment, to be just what he appears—a pleasant, articulate individual of no great political sophistication, but with an instinctive understanding of the feelings of those whom he seeks to represent. The apotheosis of Babbitt, he once thought of calling himself a "Main Street Republican" to distinguish himself from candidates such as John Connally, who represented the boardrooms.[3] Reagan's biographers have struggled hard to find anyone who actually disliked him in his early years, as distinct from disliking his politics; but with hardly any success. He seems to have entered upon the political stage with all the accoutrements that a good public-relations man would have striven for years to try to create.

RICHARD NIXON, on the other hand, was to prove the despair of those who sought to mould him into a gentler, more liberal pattern, and it has been left to Stephen Ambrose in *The Education of a Politician*[4] to show that Nixon was really rather better than he appeared. "Nixonland", declared Adlai Stevenson in 1956, was "a land of slander and scare, the land of sly innuendo, the poison pen, the anonymous phone call, and hustling, pushing, shoving; the land of smash and grab and anything to win." At every stage of his political career, Nixon sought to prove that he was "a new Nixon", a statesman who had dispensed with the tricks of the politician; but the old Nixon would stubbornly reappear. Herblock in 1956 drew a cartoon of Nixon facing four mud-stained figures labelled "Nixon 1954, Nixon 1952, Nixon 1950, Nixon 1948", saying, "*Now you kids beat it*". But they never did. Indeed, there has probably been no other President this century who has been so deeply loathed.

---

[2] Hedley Donovan, *Roosevelt to Reagan*, p. xviii.
[3] Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), p. 24.
[4] *Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962*. By STEPHEN AMBROSE. Simon & Schuster, $22.95, £16.00.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"On a recent trip to the New York and Washington areas", writes Cy Sulzberger, for 23 years author of the thrice-weekly "Foreign Affairs" column in *The New York Times*:

> "I was astonished at the emotional dislike for Richard Nixon I discovered among all kinds of people—old and young, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican. It was not just political disagreement but vituperative personal hatred. . . . To my surprise, despite the passage of time since the Watergate scandal, the fevered detestation seemed to continue unabated. . . . This anger was, I found, astonishingly personal, not in the least abstract. It was the same kind of personal hatred that survivors of Hitler and Stalin in Germany and Russia felt toward their persecutors."

If Stephen Ambrose does not quite penetrate to the core of this complex man, he has nevertheless produced a magnificent biography of someone whom he admits he "had never admired and did not want to write about". *Nixon: The Education of a Politician* has been hailed as a revisionist biography, but it is far from being a work of exculpation. Ambrose does not deny that Nixon made a practice of smearing his political opponents—whether Jerry Voorhis, Helen Gahagan Douglas, Dean Acheson, or Adlai Stevenson—either as Communist sympathisers (a charge which Nixon knew was untrue) or as politicians whose patriotism was suspect. Ambrose's defence—a measured one—is that "Richard Nixon did not invent anti-Communism, nor was he unique in his use, or misuse, of the issue. And it should be added that he was egged on by older and presumably wiser men—not that he needed much encouraging." Indeed, so desperate were the Republicans in the immediate post-War years, having been in opposition since 1933, that use of what came to be known as McCarthyite tactics was very much the rule rather than the exception.

One of the reasons, perhaps, why Nixon—unlike some others who used this ploy—was never forgiven by American liberals was that he turned out to be right about Alger Hiss. Ambrose shows that Hiss's association with the Communist Party was common gossip in the Washington of the late 1940s, even before Whittaker Chambers denounced him. Chambers claimed to have told the Justice Department about Hiss at regular intervals since 1939, while J. Edgar Hoover had been warning Roosevelt and Truman from 1943. Hiss had been gradually eased out, first from his policy-making role, and then out of government entirely; and by 1946 he had become "a major political embarrassment". Thus, "Nixon's contribution to the Hiss case was not so much exposing the man as insisting that something be done about him." For the Justice Department had failed to investigate the charges against Hiss, while Truman used executive power to cover up for him, and the liberal intelligentsia threw up its hands in pious horror at the notion that a man as cultivated as Hiss could be a perjurer and a Soviet agent.

In the orgy of demagoguery which followed, Nixon was by no means the most extreme in his utterances. Indeed, in comparison with Senators such as McCarthy, Jenner, Mundt and Knowland, Nixon could appear the very model of a statesman and a scholar. Moreover, the actions of some of his opponents do not bear much scrutiny either. Truman ordered that his records in the Office of Price Administration, where Nixon had briefly worked before the War, should be investigated; officials in the Justice Department sought to substantiate unfounded rumours about Nixon's behaviour in the Navy; the Democratic National Committee sought to use forged letters to prove that Nixon had taken money from the oil industry; while Drew Pearson falsely accused him of fraud and was forced to issue a retraction.

NIXON WAS NEITHER a crook nor a demagogue. As a young Congressman and Senator, he stood four-square for Marshall Aid, collective security, and aid to underdeveloped countries at a time when the Republican Right, whose support he needed, was vigorously isolationist. And, although Nixon sought to establish a bridgehead for the Republican Party in the South, he was more forthright than Eisenhower in his denunciation of segregation, a strong supporter of civil rights for Negroes, and an honorary member of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People.

Although Nixon polarised opinion sharply, within the Republican Party itself he performed an essential brokerage role, holding together the isolationists from the Western states, whose visceral anti-Communism he shared, and the more liberal Dewey/Eisenhower wing, whose main strength lay in the North-Eastern seaboard and who shared Nixon's

Strategy
The Logic of War and Peace
EDWARD N. LUTTWAK
'What he has to say can be summed up in two sentences. First, war has a paradoxical logic of its own which is quite distinct from, and often opposite to, the logic of peace. Second, this logic works itself out at five distinct levels of strategy, each of which interacts vertically with all the others. If one grasps these fundamental theoretical principles, much that seems obscure or contradictory becomes clear; not only in the conduct of war, but in the maintenance of peace.' Michael Howard, *Times Literary Supplement*
Belknap
£15.95 Cloth 320pp 0-674-83995-1
HARVARD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
126 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 9SA

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

belief in collective security. It was as a unifier that Nixon found himself, at the age of 39, after only six years in politics, candidate for the Vice-Presidency on a ticket with Eisenhower, the most popular American of the age. The second youngest Vice-President in American history, Nixon acted as Republican Party spokesman in the country at large, a task that came to him by default with Taft dead, Dewey retired from politics, and Eisenhower anxious to preserve his non-partisan reputation. In fact, Nixon's slashing attacks on the Democrats as purveyors of socialism at home and dupes of Communism abroad were (as Ambrose shows) in part instigated by Eisenhower, who was able to maintain his own prestige while shovelling the dirt on to Nixon.

Nixon faced the problem that the American people "liked Ike", but not his Party; and, indeed, the Democrats in Congress were more reliable supporters of Eisenhower's main policies (support for NATO, foreign aid, maintaining tax levels until the Budget was balanced, extending social security) than were the Republicans. Eisenhower therefore saw no reason to campaign for the re-election of Senators of the likes of Knowland or Mundt, who would vote against his programmes—but Nixon had to.

Not only did Nixon have to defend the record of a Republican administration in a country whose registered voters were predominantly Democrat; he also had to proclaim the merits of a conservative programme amidst an electorate yearning for activism. Eisenhower's achievement as President had been to coax Americans away from the crisis mentality on which they had lived almost continuously since the Depression. His period of office was marked by a gradual reduction of international tension and a steady growth in consumer prosperity. But, precisely because the America of the late 1950s was so much more confident and optimistic a country than it had been a decade earlier, the Republican administration came to be accused of complacency, of failing to maximise the rate of economic growth, and of allowing the Soviets to establish a "missile gap" over the United States—a charge made by Kennedy in 1960 and later shown to be unfounded.

Ironically, Nixon agreed with many of the charges made by the Democrats against the President. He too felt that more should have been spent on defence, that a more forceful stance should have been adopted towards the Soviet Union, that tax cuts should be made, even if it meant budgeting for a deficit, so long as that would help ensure economic growth. By 1960, Nixon shared with Kennedy the "common assumption that there were no limits to what America could achieve, if only given the proper leadership. Their goals were boundless. Both thought that it was possible to eliminate racial prejudice, end poverty, roll back communism, and ensure freedom and democracy to all the world, simultaneously." Indeed, Nixon "sometimes sounded more like Kennedy than Kennedy". The trouble was that, forced to run on Eisenhower's policies, he found himself unable to compete with Kennedy's easy promises.

All the same, the presidential election of 1960 was far from being the ringing endorsement of Kennedy portrayed by such disciples of Camelot as Theodore White in his voguish book *The Making of the President, 1960*, in which Nixon was cast as Mordred to Kennedy's King Arthur. Forced to defend a conservative record in an era of liberal expectations, and representing a party outnumbered by registered Democrats by three to two, Nixon came within a whisker of victory.

Statesmanlike in defeat, Nixon returned to California where two years later he stood for the governorship, only to be beaten by the lack-lustre incumbent, Pat Brown, despite the characteristic innuendos—bumper stickers asking "*Is Brown Pink?*", fake pamphlets, and a doctored photograph showing Governor Brown bowing to Khrushchev. In place of the "Establishment types" who had run his Vice-Presidential campaigns, Nixon was beginning to attract to himself men such as Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Maurice Stans, and Herbert Kalmbach—all of whom were to be involved in Watergate. They were, says Ambrose, "young, eager, tough and partisan. Most thought of politics as campaigning; few had any experience in the politics of governing, of trade-off and compromise, or responsibility, of fashioning and carrying through a program or a policy. . . ."

Still, in 1962, it hardly seemed to matter who Nixon found himself campaigning with. For, apart from a few shrewd observers—Harry Truman, Pat Brown himself, Caspar Weinberger, then vice-chairman of the Republican Party in California—the general assumption was that Nixon's political career was now over; and yet, "As he drove home from his last press conference, he was already discussing his future". The second volume of this biography will analyse the astonishing political resurrection of the man whom Ambrose regards as the major figure in world politics after the age of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt.

MEANWHILE, CY SULZBERGER'S *The World and Richard Nixon*[5] reminds us of Nixon's achievements in foreign policy—the rapprochement with China in 1971, the ending of the Viet Nam War, the arms negotiations leading to SALT I, and the Middle East armistice agreement that led to Carter's Camp David agreement. Sulzberger's book is hardly an analysis of these momentous developments, but a hastily compiled pot-pourri of excerpts from his interview notes, laced with long quotations from the Nixon and Kissinger Memoirs. He is, indeed, quite uncritical about Nixon's foreign policy, and both he and Ambrose err too much on the side of charity in evaluating it.

To implement policies contrary to those which one presented to one's electorate is a standard ploy of democratic politicians—de Gaulle in Algeria, Begin in the Sinai, Nixon in Viet Nam and China. In each case the Opposition, who had favoured similar policies—the French and Israeli socialists and the American Democrats—had been denounced as traitors for even contemplating the very solutions which were later to be implemented by the men of the Right. Yet, in America at least, the style of debate which Nixon favoured prevented any rational discussion of foreign policy issues at all.

[5] *The World and Richard Nixon*. By C. L. SULZBERGER. Simon & Schuster, $18.95, £16.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If anyone who disagreed with prevailing orthodoxy could be dismissed as being a covert Communist sympathiser or a person of dubious patriotism, then it would become impossible to conduct an intelligent appraisal of how the very real threat posed by the Soviet Union and China should best be met. Options which merited genuine discussion came to be taboo simply because of the opprobrium they would bring upon those who sought to discuss them. Thus, not only did McCarthyism cast a blight upon the formulation of a rational American foreign policy, but the style of political campaigning favoured by Nixon made politicians look carefully over their shoulder before challenging the reigning orthodoxy. The search for a nuclear test ban, advocated by Adlai Stevenson in 1956, was denounced by Nixon as "treasonable nonsense"; by 1959 Eisenhower was himself seeking such a treaty. The wild rhetoric which was Nixon's trade-mark might just have served to blind America's leaders to the very real possibilities of *détente* after Stalin's death—a *détente* which Eisenhower sought six years later when the chance of securing any benefits from it for the West had disappeared. In the 1960s, Lyndon Johnson would, no doubt, have been glad to settle the Viet Nam War on the terms which Nixon eventually obtained, and to recognise Red China, were it not for the fact that, if he had done so, the first person to denounce this as a treasonable sell-out would have been the very same Richard Nixon. In politics, a man must be judged by his words as well as by his actions.

On 15 July 1960, as the presidential election campaign was beginning, Richard Nixon received a letter from the self-styled "Errol Flynn of the B movies", Ronald Reagan. In it, Reagan urged Nixon to tag Kennedy's

> "*bold new imaginative* program with its proper age. Under the tousled boyish hair cut it is still old Karl Marx—first launched a century ago. There is nothing new in the idea of a government being Big Brother to us all . . . . Hitler called his 'State Socialism' and way before him it was 'benevolent monarchy'."

In October 1964, Reagan delivered a speech on national television in support of Barry Goldwater's doomed presidential candidature. Larded with some dubious statistics, and quotations from authorities ranging from Plutarch to Franklin Roosevelt and Sumner Slichter, the speech brought in one million dollars, more than had been raised by any political speech up to that time. David Broder called it "the most successful political début since William Jennings Bryan electrified the 1896 Democratic convention with his 'Cross of Gold' speech".

Anne Edwards's *Early Reagan*[6] is an attempt to chart the course of Reagan's life up to his emergence as a national political figure. It is a sprawling, gossipy book, lacking the insight of Lou Cannon's *Reagan* (1982), the best of the biographies so far. Anne Edwards overrates the importance of Reagan's clashes with Communists and fellow-travellers, in the Hollywood of the late 1940s, as a factor in his transition from liberal Democrat to Goldwater Republican. Reaganism is much more a product of the 1960s than the 1940s, a response to domestic cultural frustrations rather than events abroad—student revolt, black riots, and accelerating inflation, all leading to a disenchantment with the promises of the New Frontier and the Great Society.

In the California of the 1960s, the true revolutionaries were neither the Berkeley students nor the rioters of Watts, but the sober-suited small businessmen and shopkeepers who gradually came to appreciate that their resentments could be given expression by this purveyor of "Goldwaterism without Goldwater". For, while Taft and Eisenhower hardly dared to call themselves conservatives, both Goldwater and Reagan embraced the label with enthusiasm. "Had there not been a Barry Goldwater willing to make that lonely walk", Reagan told the Conservative Political Action Conference in 1981, "we would not be talking of a celebration tonight."[7]

And yet, if conservatism has anything to do with the notion of restraints upon the use of power, it would be a mistake to call Ronald Reagan—or Richard Nixon, for that matter—a genuine conservative. In his foreign policy at least, Reagan's approach was based upon what Denis Brogan once called

LIVES OF THE LEFT
A new series of political biographies

J Ramsay MacDonald AUSTEN MORGAN
£19.50 hardback, £7.95 paperback

A J Cook PAUL DAVIES

R H Tawney ANTHONY WRIGHT

James Maxton BILL KNOX

'Big Bill' Haywood MELVYN DUBOFSKY

Karl Kautsky DICK GEARY
All at £16.50 hardback, £4.95 paperback

British politics today
BILL JONES, DENNIS KAVANAGH
Includes treatment of the June 1987 General Election
£3.95 paperback

The financial system today
Understanding financial information
ERIC E ROWLEY
£17.50 hardback, £5.95 paperback

The bleak midwinter 1947
ALEX J ROBERTSON
£25.00 hardback

manchester
UNIVERSITY PRESS Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

[6] *Early Reagan: The Rise of an American Hero.* By ANNE EDWARDS. William Morrow, $21.95; Hodder & Stoughton, £14.95.

[7] Quoted in Kevin Phillips, *Post-Conservative America* (Random House, 1982) which remains the best analysis of the ideology of Reaganism.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"the illusion of American omnipotence", as was that of his liberal forebears—Johnson, Kennedy, Truman, Woodrow Wilson—in whom the origins of this style of undifferentiated globalism lie. It has been this conception of America's role in the world which has given rise to and legitimised the Imperial Presidency: if America has to remain eternally vigilant against a permanent enemy able to strike at the free world's interests at any point on the globe, then the state of international tension which results will point the need for the federal executive to be free to act without being trammelled by an interfering legislature—a conception of the presidency which reaches its absurd apotheosis in Oliver North's plea for the chief executive to be free from the cumbersome paraphernalia of checks and balances so carefully erected by the Founding Fathers. The President, as Richard Neustadt declared in *Presidential Power* (that Bible for the New Frontiersman of the 1960s), must love power. He must exert the power of his office to the full if he is to fulfil the expectations placed upon him.

The truth is that such a conception of the presidency is bound to lead to disappointment, for no individual can—or should—meet its requirements. The presidency becomes an impossible institution, something totally remote from the real universe inhabited by the electorate. It makes the American system of government dangerously susceptible to the abuse of power. Is it not time, in this year of the Bicentennial of the Constitution, to look again at the project initiated by the Founding Fathers—themselves men of a highly conservative disposition—and ask how their aims might be better achieved in the very different world of today?

Lord of Misrule

Hitler's Legacy—By RICHARD MAYNE

THE VOGUE FOR World War II seems never-ending. John Boorman's film *Hope and Glory*, about London suburban childhood, is only the latest of its movie manifestations; and 1987 has seen several books of wartime reminiscences, some by people then adult, others by writers whose growing-up was accelerated and forced by grim events.

A Child of the War[1] is George MacBeth's contribution to this restrospective mode. As in the case of Boorman, what impinged chiefly on MacBeth was the Blitz. He lost his father in an air-raid on Sheffield; and his mother had to cope with bringing up a son still only nine years old. Eleven years later, when the boy was about to take up a scholarship to Oxford, his mother died of cirrhosis of the liver—or so it was said at the time. MacBeth now suspects that it may have been cancer, hushed up by superstition and thereby turned into something more shameful and far more unlikely.

This modest, candid, and moving book entirely lacks self-pity, forgivable as that might have been. Each of its four sections—"The Land-mine", "The Shell", "The Iron Lung", "The Terminus"—is prefaced by a poem, distilling into verse the emotion restrained in the prose. Familiar emblems recur: animals and birds; cold steel; claws, entrails. The roots of MacBeth's imagination, I see now, are not all exotic. There is a domestic macabre. But in writing of these things, he retains or perhaps discovers a resigned poise, especially in the poems, which without belittling grief makes it just about bearable.

I wish I could say the same of Vernon Scannell's *Argument of Kings*.[2] His poems, like some of his novels, are moving and accomplished, accommodating experiences like boxing which few writers can truthfully claim. In World War II, Scannell was a soldier serving with the Gordon Highlanders. In the stress and exhaustion of the desert fighting in Tunisia, he walked away from a battlefield of corpses, technically a deserter, in reality dazed and sick. Caught, he was sent to a military prison in Alexandria, then shipped home, with his sentence suspended, to join the Normandy landings. Shot in the leg, he ended up in hospital blues near Warrington; but he was a bad patient, absconding, boozing and canoodling while still on crutches. His book ends with a comic, pathetic, really touching near-romance which came to nothing. The overall impression, however, is painfully sad.

Scannell has previously published a volume of autobiography, *The Tiger and the Rose*, which deals with some of the same events in a sturdy, more external fashion. *Argument of Kings* is an effort to probe deeper, and express the guilt so long kept hidden. "This book, I suppose, is a kind of confession." To make it, because the man he was then (at 21) is so different from his present self, Scannell adopts a hazardous convention: he writes in the third person, and gives himself the baptismal name—John Vernon Bain—which he changed

[1] *A Child of the War*. By GEORGE MACBETH. Cape, £10.95.
[2] *Argument of Kings: An Autobiography*. By VERNON SCANNELL. Robson Books, £10.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Scannell when on the run from the Army. So doing, he also employs some of the methods of fiction, notably direct speech. He insists that there is no falsehood in the proceeding: "the book is autobiography." Nevertheless, the distancing involved is disconcerting—so much so that one questions its motives, and wonders whether the whole narrative strategy is not a form of local anaesthetic against wounds that still badly ache.

FAR WORSE wounds, of course, maimed or destroyed many millions, not least in Germany itself. One such victim, a widow torn from her children in 1944, was Luise Rinser, a young writer from Bavaria. Denounced by a friend for her Socialist views, she was sent to Traunstein women's prison. There she kept a diary, published as *Gefängnistagebuch* in 1946, and now deftly translated by Michael Hulse.[3] Traunstein was no Treblinka. By comparison with the Holocaust, Luise Rinser's was a mild captivity. But it was captivity none the less; and it could easily have ended in a death sentence. Instead came release—and publication. The book sold steadily—yet after the second impression Luise Rinser wanted no more: "I had heard so much about the suffering of those who were in concentration camps that my own experiences no longer seemed worth mentioning." She also felt that it was wrong to be obsessed with the past.

What helped change her mind was a chance meeting, in 1963, with an unreconstructed Nazi who plonked himself down at her table in a station waiting-room. Shocked by his devil's loyalty to the *SS*, she mentioned it to the people in her train compartment—an elderly Czech woman, an East German from Dresden, a Rhineland woman, well-fed and bejewelled, and a Protestant minister who was reading *The Last of the Just*. In their various ways, *none of them wanted to know*.

How unsurprising this should have been becomes very clear from Claudia Koonz's mammoth study, *Mothers in the Fatherland*.[4] Women were certainly victimised by the Third Reich; many resisted; far more kept their heads down. But some, like the leader of the Nazi *Frauenwerk* or Women's Bureau, Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, enthusiastically promoted the aims of the Party. It was not only because, at first, these seemed noble and respectable by contrast with the "permissiveness" of Weimar; it was not only because conservatives began by finding Nazism reassuring. The Nazis were also able to win feminine favour by flattery, offering their own tainted version of women's liberation. In his *ABC des Nationalsozialismus*, Curt Rosten wrote:

> *We want our women tried and true*
> *Not as decorated toys.*
> *The German wife and mother too*
> *Bears riches no foreign woman enjoys.*
>
> *The German woman is noble wine*
> *She loves and enriches the earth.*
> *The German woman is bright sunshine*
> *To home and hearth.*

Line two of these verses, appositely quoted by Professor Koonz, might just pass muster with feminists. Line one is a giveaway; so is line eight—the pure essence of *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*. And it was all a lie. As Jeremy Noakes remarks in his article on "Nazism" in the excellent new *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Institutions*,[5] "nihilism and inhumanity" were at the core of Nazi philosophy: not exactly feminine (or feminist) qualities.

Yet many otherwise rational German women fell for a male tyranny which explicitly announced its sexist programme. Gottfried Feder put it quite bluntly:

> "The insane dogma of equality led as surely to the emancipation of the Jews as to the emancipation of women. The Jew stole the woman from us. . . . We must kill the dragon to restore her to her holy position as servant and maid."

Or, as a more cynical Nazi declared:

> "I am no friend of female suffrage. If however we must continue with this tomfoolery, then we should draw what advantage we can. . . . Women will always vote for law and order and a uniform, you can be sure of that."

THE AUTHOR OF these last words, of course, was Adolf Hitler. His grotesque shadow falls across all these books like that of Ivan the Terrible in Eisenstein's great films. George MacBeth refers to "his rapid-fire delivery and his repeated slogans"—although it was the rhythmic whipping-up of his audience, like a practised preacher, with pauses, crescendos, the dropped voice and the snarling shout, that seemed to me his hypnotic hallmark. For Germany, he was the Lord of Misrule. Yet that phrase has fruitful ambiguity. The Lord, Abbot, or Master of Misrule, in a great man's house, was in effect the master of the Christmas games and revels; and even before the Nazis' downfall there was an ambivalence in Hitler's image. Even those who knew the sinister reality were inclined at times to treat him as a figure of fun. As David Drew points out in his meticulous *Kurt Weill: A Handbook*,[6] Bertolt Brecht's *Schweyk in the Second World War* had long been anticipated in spirit by Weill: "His project memos of 1937-43 repeatedly approach the phenomenon of Hitlerism, either by way of history (Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon) or through contemporary satire." And Zbyněk Zeman, in his light and learned *Heckling Hitler: Caricatures of the Third Reich*,[7] aptly juxtaposes "Two ways of looking at Hitler in a bubble: one sinister, the other comic." The first shows a death's-head jester, offering to goggling ninnies a smug, firm, seductive *Führer*; the second,

---

[3] *Prison Journal*. By LUISE RINSER. Translated by MICHAEL HULSE. Macmillan, £9.95.

[4] *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics*. By CLAUDIA KOONZ. Cape, £18.00.

[5] *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Institutions*. Edited by VERNON BOGDANOR. Blackwell, £45.00.

[6] *Kurt Weill: A Handook*. By DAVID DREW. Faber, £25.00.

[7] *Heckling Hitler: Caricatures of the Third Reich*. By ZBYNĚK ZEMAN. I. B. Tauris, £9.50.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by David Low, in 1933, has a small, fussed Hitler inflating a giant rubber doll of himself, with a bewildered Germany cowering under it, and a paper reading "*Total absence of any constructive policy so far*".

That can be ascribed to innocence. But the dichotomy between Hitler as monster and Hitler as clown persists through 120 pages of dazzling cartoons. Even at the time, I remember feeling divided. There was something about Hitler's eyes—their earnestness, perhaps—that put me in mind of a trusting dog or a puzzled chimpanzee. The moustache, of course, was inexplicable: I learned only much later, from Luigi Barzini, that:

> ". . . it had a third dimension that was not apparent in photographs. It was thick and bristled horizontally forward, somewhat like the quills of a porcupine, almost as far as the tip of his nose."

This, and the cowlick, and the Nazi salute seem still to be in the repertory of rather desperate comedians. Mel Brooks is undoubtedly the best of them, followed closely by Spike Milligan. The worst, in my experience, was a litle old man I saw on stage in Luxembourg in about 1956. It's surely very strange that we should still try to get easy laughs by Hitler imitations. Did Roman wags don a toga and laurel wreath to take off Caesar? Did Mongols, forty years on from 1227, go on cocking a snook at the late Genghis Khan? Well, maybe. I have, occasionally, seen Frenchmen mocking Napoleon. But think of the contrast with Mussolini. Recently, the British small screen has played host to George C. Scott's remarkably forceful impersonation of *Il Duce*, historically inaccurate, but an acting *tour de force*. And not a squeak of caricature: instead, an excessively reverent portrait of Mussolini, that brutal egotist, as a family man. . . . I can't see even the feeblest comic trying to raise a smile by sending up blessed Benito. Yet Hitler, responsible for far more carnage, is still good for a rather weary grin.

It may be, of course, that the very magnitude of the Nazis' crimes makes us still feel the need for exorcism, shriving, ridicule as a form of purge. This, I suspect, is what fuels some Jewish jokes on the subject—as on many other tyrants and persecutors over the centuries. Jews, after all, have been modern dictators' most notable and numerous victims; and their persecution by the Nazis, as Patrick J. Hearden stresses in his study of how the US entered World War II, *Roosevelt Confronts Hitler*,[8] was one factor in combating isolationism. Although the reign of terror coincided with a rapid rise in American unemployment, the President did his best to mitigate the plight of refugees. It was an uphill struggle. "The State Department advised him that any effort to relax the immigration laws might backfire and provoke Congress to tighten existing regulations." Hence the tortuous efforts to achieve international consensus; hence forlorn hopes of "building a bridge to the Germans"; hence the contradictory attitudes towards boycotting German exports. As Sumner Welles wrote in June 1939:

> "The President feels . . . that the long delay in the accomplishment of anything concrete by these individuals and organizations that are supposedly most interested in furthering an orderly emigration of Jews from Germany to new homes has obviously placed the German authorities in a position where they can sit back and smile and say that the people who are most vocal in their protests against the German treatment of the Jews have been entirely unwilling to do anything of a practical nature to assist the Jewish refugees."

As usual, it was too little too late. But the controversy, scandal, and horror aroused by the Nazis' actions undoubtedly prepared the way for eventual American intervention: Pearl Harbor was a trigger, but the gun was already loaded. In Patrick Hearden's words, "the primary documents clearly reveal that American leaders regarded the Third Reich as the root of the crisis. . . . Indeed, President Franklin D. Roosevelt began maneuvering the United States into a military confrontation with Adolf Hitler several months before the Japanese launched their raid on the American naval base in Hawaii."

ROOSEVELT'S CHILDREN is the provocative title that Edward Mortimer, formerly of All Souls and *The Times*, now with the *Financial Times*, has chosen for his study of that generation of policy-makers throughout the

[8] *Roosevelt Confronts Hitler: America's Entry into World War II.* By PATRICK J. HEARDEN. Northern Illinois University Press, $27.00, £25.65; paper $9.00, £8.55.

SURVEY

Editor: Leopold Labedz

Vol. 29 no. 4 (127)

The first of four special issues

SEVENTY YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION:

HAS THE SOVIET SYSTEM SATISFIED THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE?

Guest Editor of the issue: G. R. Urban

Annual subscription: UK £17 US $39 Elsewhere £20
Single copies: UK £5 US $10

SURVEY Editorial Office:
Ilford House, 133 Oxford Street,
London W1R 1TD, England
(Tel. 01–734 0592)

SURVEY Subscription Office:
44 Great Windmill Street, London W1V 7PA, England
(Tel. 01–434 3063)

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world who were born during or soon after World War II.[9] Having inherited the post-War world the wartime giants bequeathed them, these men and women—in Mortimer's view—are in danger of repeating the errors of the 1930s. He notes a number of depressing symptoms: "the loss of faith in multilateral institutions"; "the loss of confidence in government itself as an instrument for dealing with human problems"; "a ludicrous over-confidence in market forces" (Chris Patten, here quoted in respect of the Third World):

> "Bretton Woods is gone. Marshall Aid is a distant memory. The UN, in which such enormous hopes were placed . . ., is now treated with open contempt, and performs no more than a marginal role in power politics. The Third World is disillusioned with Western leadership and even with its own capacity. . . . NATO *is* still there, but its foundations have been rotted by the long calm on the eastern front and the increasingly sour view that Americans and West Europeans take of each other's leaders and policies. The postwar international system, in short, is like an aircraft which is still airborne, but whose motor has conked out. Skilful piloting may keep us aloft for a time, but unless we either repair the engine or replace it we are sure to hit the ground sooner or later."

Had his book been written a few months afterwards, Mortimer might have added to his catalogue of symptoms the title that Ken Livingstone chose for his recent account of his Greater London Council shenanigans: *If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It.*[10] "Tomfoolery" was Hitler's word.

Edward Mortimer is nevertheless still optimistic. "The crucial battle", he believes, "is to develop a coherent multinational public opinion in favour of a coherent multinational system." Such a system would be very much more than the old *Pax Americana*. Europe would have to bear more responsibility—for its own defence; for helping to create more monetary stability; for contributing to a multinational Marshall Plan which among other things would collectively write off unrepayable Third World debts; for keeping world markets open; for promoting East-West dialogue; for peacekeeping; for space research; for protecting the environment. "All that", he admits, "begins to sound very starry-eyed and utopian." It certainly does. But he continues:

> "All I am trying to do is to think on the scale that people thought on in the 1940s—a habit which political leaders and thinkers have almost lost. Of course it is more difficult now because then . . . war had put vast energies at the disposal of political leaders and had made populations ready to accept extreme measures involving considerable sacrifices. They knew from direct and horrifying experience what the alternative was. Our generation does not have that sense of urgency, because we were too young to share that experience. But a repetition of that experience for pedagogic purposes is a luxury none of us can afford. It is high time we used our imaginations."

My sentiments exactly. Is it too much to hope that the current wave of reminiscences about World War II may eventually shift our fascinated attention towards the true giants of the post-War era, and away from the strutting, moustachioed, murderous Lord of Misrule?

---

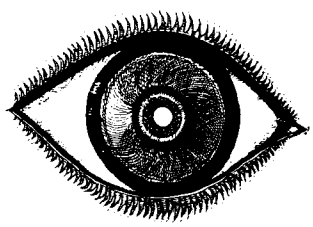
[9] *Roosevelt's Children: Tomorrow's World Leaders and Their World.* By EDWARD MORTIMER. Hamish Hamilton, £12.95.

[10] *If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It.* By KEN LIVINGSTONE. Collins, £12.00.

Terrorism Unlimited

Facts and Fallacies—By BARBARA BECK

> **"Terrorism:** *the threat or use of violence for political purposes by individuals or groups, whether acting for or in opposition to established governmental authority, when such actions are intended to shock, stun, or intimidate a target group wider than the immediate victims."*



THAT IS the US State Department's definition of terrorism. Those with a taste for word games can choose from another hundred-odd definitions in the flood of books on terrorism: a recently published bibliography of international terrorism lists 5,600 items in English alone. They span a vast spectrum, from the frankly propagandist to the fastidiously encyclopaedic. Their authors are equally diverse: ranging from those professionally involved in combating terrorism, investigative journalists, lawyers and philosophers, to experts on international affairs.

Most people, of course, know perfectly well what terrorism is, and how they would deal with it if they were in charge, just as they know perfectly well how they would run the country if they were Prime Minister. Their list of well-known facts about terrorism might run something like this.

1. Terrorism is a new and unprecedented phenomenon.

2. Terrorism is one of the most important and dangerous problems facing mankind today, and should be put on the top of our political agenda.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3. Terrorism develops as a response to injustice, oppression, and persecution where legitimate outlets are not available. The only effective way to reduce it is to deal with its underlying causes, e.g., by enfranchising minority groups. Suppression will simply keep it festering below the surface.

4. Terrorists are inspired by ideology and spend their lives in poverty.

5. Terrorism is essentially a Middle Eastern problem; its victims are mainly American. An Arab-Israeli settlement would achieve a dramatic decline in the number of incidents.

6. State-sponsored terrorism is a new and highly dangerous variation on the theme. It is gradually turning into a present-day substitute for warfare.

EVERY ONE of these statements is, in fact, a fallacy. The list, abbreviated and paraphrased, is taken from one of the most rewarding of the recent crop of books on terrorism, Walter Laqueur's *The Age of Terrorism*—an updated version of his volume on the subject of ten years ago but, apart from the historical chapters, virtually a new book which casts a cool analytical eye on what has happened in the past decade.[1] With its help, and that of a stack of other books on the subject which have appeared over the past year or so, the amateur terrorism-watcher might end up with a revised and quite different list of well-known facts.

1. Terrorism has been around not just since the *terreur* of the French Revolution, from which it took its name, but for at least a couple of thousand years, and probably a lot longer. Tiberius and Caligula knew all about it, and so did the Zealots in Palestine in the 1st century A.D. What have changed in recent years, thanks to new technology, are the methods used by terrorists and the scale of publicity they can command. Improved communications also mean better international links and sometimes mutual support between ideologically disparate groups in different countries.

2. Terrorism, although often spectacular, callous and bloody, actually claims quite a modest number of lives. The three best-known data-bases—the Rand chronology, Edward Mickolus's ITERATE computer system, and the Central Intelligence Agency's international terrorism statistics—although they use different criteria and differ widely, all put the number of victims in international terrorist incidents in the ten years to 1977 at under 2,000, spread among up to 3,000 incidents. There is no evidence of an inexorable increase, only of sharp fluctuations from year to year. The number of people killed as a result of ordinary crime in the United States in an average year is around 20,000.

3. Terrorism can develop anywhere, under almost any political system. Democracy is no protection. Terrorism in Spain gathered strength after Franco died; in Turkey and West Germany it flourished under left-of-centre governments. The only real safeguard appears to be an effective dictatorship. The terrorists' demands—a united Ireland, an Armenian state on Turkish soil—are usually Utopian, and even if they could be met would be likely to lead to more bloodshed.

4. Terrorists need money to be effective. The odd bank robbery is no longer enough. Some modern terrorists are sponsored by wealthy countries; some have homed in on the international drug trade ("narco-terrorism") to finance their activities. Many of them purport to lead ordinary lives within the community. They cannot afford to look like barefoot revolutionaries. Walter Laqueur's book contains a fascinating, though admittedly slightly conjectural, table on terrorist budgets, starting with Russia's *Narodnaya Volya* in the 1880s (income: insignificant; sources: donations from well-wishers), and progressing to the likes of the PLO, whose annual income is variously estimated at from $150 million to well in excess of $1 billion.

5. In 1984, according to US Department of State figures quoted in a Chatham House Special Paper on *Terrorism and International Order*,[2] Western Europe suffered more terrorist incidents than the Middle East (39% against 34% of the total). Most of the rest were concentrated on Latin America and Sub-Sahara Africa. The number of incidents in the USSR and Eastern Europe was negligible.

6. State-sponsored international terrorism (from whatever quarter) is a destabilising force and does run a risk of escalating into military action. But to some extent it is self-limiting: countries engage in covert activities because they do not want to flout the rules openly, so they generally prefer not to push things to the point of getting caught. Besides, only a relatively small minority of countries engages in state-sponsored terrorism. No list of such countries would command an easy consensus. But Ray Cline (a former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency) and Yonah Alexander in their book *Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare*[3] hugely overstretch credibility by suggesting that 80% of all terrorist incidents are inspired by the Soviet Union. The book was written before the American bombing of Libya and the Iran-gate scandal, but the authors' minds were clearly made up anyway.

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS
Leading academics
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS
Experienced honours graduates
TRANSLATORS
Qualified, most European languages
ARCHIVISTS
Editing and indexing by word processor

Research Assistance Routledge Associates
4 Lauriston Road, London SW19 4TQ
Phone 01-947 9375

---

[1] *The Age of Terrorism*. By WALTER LAQUEUR. Weidenfeld, £17.95.

[2] *Terrorism and International Order*. By LAWRENCE FREEDMAN, CHRISTOPHER HILL, ADAM ROBERTS, R. J. VINCENT, PAUL WILKINSON, and PHILIP WINDSOR. Chatham House Special Paper. The Royal Institute of International Affairs/Routledge & Kegan Paul, £5.95.

[3] *Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare*. By RAY CLINE and YONAH ALEXANDER. IPI (Wildwood Distribution Services), £13.45.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Assuming that the second list is more accurate than the first, we can conclude that international terrorism is a serious but not a desperate problem. What can be done about it? Cline and Alexander produce a host of suggestions, starting with Intelligence and political and diplomatic pressure, and escalating to economic sanctions and eventually the use of paramilitary or military force. But they also quote an array of top-level US politicians, including Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz, who concede that it is not easy to decide which of these remedies to apply in what circumstances.

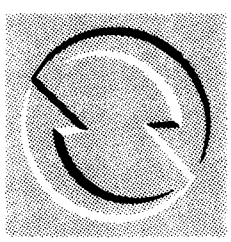
Most experts agree that constant vigilance is a minimum precaution. Some aspects of modern technology—such as plastic explosives—and some aspects of modern life in general—such as mass air travel—have opened up new opportunities for terrorists, saddling the rest of the population with constant danger or at best permanent inconvenience. The days of stepping on to an aircraft unsearched (or unscanned) will clearly never return. Novice terrorists could do worse than turn to the appendix of Stephen Segaller's *Invisible Armies*,[4] which provides a highly pragmatic A-to-Z guide to the tricks of the trade (Accommodation to Zeal, via Explosives, Kidnap and Recruitment). The very ease of engaging in terrorist activity—provided you do not mind too much if you get caught—suggests that it is more realistic to aim for the reduction rather than the total elimination of terrorism. The task is not hopeless, because the total number of people involved in terrorist activity is small, and losses from their ranks are not easily replaced.

THE PRIZE FOR the wettest recent prescription for dealing with terrorism goes to Richard Rubenstein, an American law professor. His *Alchemists of Revolution*[5]—a leisurely discourse on all aspects of terrorism—though it sags a bit in the middle, contains some useful items, including a typology (e.g., nationalist, ideological, and religious terrorism, and their subdivisions). Yet it also argues that we must "uproot the causes of terrorism by putting an end to the continuing oppression of classes, nations and ethnic communities, and by permitting young intellectuals to be reunited through collective action with their people".

But what if the battle for the young people's hearts and minds proves unwinnable? Take the case of West Germany's Red Army Fraction, which started off in the late 1960s as a group of mainly university-educated young people violently opposed to American policy in Viet Nam who engaged in protest bombings, stole cars, and robbed banks. After the capture in 1972 of the ringleaders, including Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof, the group embarked on a battle of wits with

[4] *Invisible Armies: Terrorism into the 1990s*. By STEPHEN SEGALLER. Michael Joseph, £15.95.

[5] *Alchemists of Revolution: Terrorism in the Modern World*. By RICHARD E. RUBENSTEIN. I. B. Tauris, £16.50.



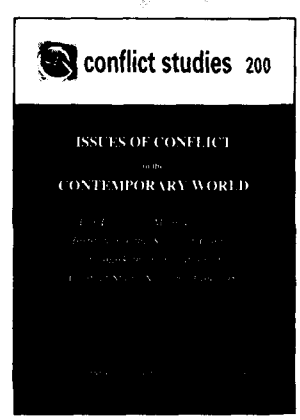
conflict studies

CONFLICT STUDIES is a well-established series of monographs providing essential background and independent analysis on contemporary national and international issues, indispensible for anyone concerned with world affairs – and those who want to go deeper than the headlines.

Commissioned from expert authors and published monthly, each Conflict Study addresses a specific subject in around 12,000 words. Recent issues have covered Afghanistan, the Mafia, Iran, Northern Ireland, African conflicts, terrorism and the ETA threat to Spain.

Subscribers also receive the quarterly CONFLICT BULLETIN with comment on contemporary issues, book reviews, updates, bibliographies etc.

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER! Each new subscriber before 1 July 1989 will have the opportunity to select 6 earlier CONFLICT STUDIES – FREE!



Published by the Centre for Security and Conflict Studies
(a division of the Institute for the Study of Conflict) 12A, Golden Square, London W1R 3AF (Tel. 01 439 7381)

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Conflict Studies (12 issues) and Conflict Bulletin (quarterly) for 1 year:

United Kingdom	*£65·00*	*USA*	*$120·00*
Europe	*£70·00*	*Elsewhere*	*£80·00*

(Postage included/overseas by air) Single copies £5·50 or US $10·00 (+ postage)

ANALYTICAL, BALANCED, CONCISE, RELEVANT ... AND ACCESSIBLE!

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the authorities to get its prisoners released, which led up to the dramatic kidnap and murder of a senior German industrialist and the spectacular hijack of a Lufthansa airliner.

By that time most of the ideological superstructure had collapsed: the name of the game, quite openly, was simply to get the gang leaders out of gaol. After the failure of the rescue attempt and the leaders' joint suicide in prison, the group's activities declined, though the past few years have seen several incidents directed against American or NATO targets. There is little to suggest that the group enjoys support on any scale among young intellectuals, or indeed that it has much of an explicit ideology to sell itself on. By world standards, the oppression of classes, nations, and ethnic communities in West Germany today does not appear to be intolerable. So what can the West Germans do to bring their young terrorists back into the fold?

This is not a question to which Stefan Aust addresses himself in *The Baader-Meinhof Group: The Inside Story of a Phenomenon*.[6] Aust, who once worked on the Left-wing newspaper *konkret*—edited, some years before his time, by Ulrike Meinhof—is concerned to provide a minutely detailed chronicle of the group's rise and fall, in the manner of those Sunday newspaper background reports on last week's disaster which always leave you wondering why they bother.

Aust says he has tried hard to avoid value judgments, and provides several versions of those events where accounts diverge widely. But he is clearly more in sympathy with some versions than with others. The surviving members of the group have consistently claimed that on the night of the Lufthansa airliner rescue at Mogadishu, Andreas Baader and other senior members of the group, far from taking their own lives at Stammheim prison, were actually murdered. Aust points to major inconsistencies in the official reports which leave questions and doubts in the mind. If the murder theory could be made to stand up, the implications would indeed be staggering. But to the outside observer the evidence he produces suggests something less sinister: that the legal bureaucracy responded to an unexpected and dramatic event with equally dramatic bungling.

As the blurb says, the book reads like a thriller, complete with flashback techniques and florid chapter-headings ("The Costumes of Weariness"; "Forty-four Days in Autumn"). But not everybody's taste runs to terrorism-as-bestseller, and it is not clear why, almost exactly ten years after the deaths at Stammheim, we are being presented with yet another addition to the already vast Baader-Meinhof literature which leaves us little the wiser. A pity about that, because the Germans are still struggling to understand their particular indigenous brand of terrorism (as are other Western Europeans in respect of their local equivalents), wondering whether it was just a sinister aberration or a more permanent blight they will have to learn to live with. But no doubt the army of terrorism-watchers is working on the answer even now.

[6] *The Baader-Meinhof Group: The Inside Story of a Phenomenon*. By STEFAN AUST. The Bodley Head, £18.00.

Looking For Camels

She followed him all afternoon,
although he didn't speak to her,
or even turn to watch her
climb the dusty road.
White moths settled on her feet.
She saw a mule
with ants inside its ear.
M'sieur, m'sieur, the children cried,
running through the poppies
with silver knives. . . . Boar droppings.
Snake country. . . . *Of course I know*
exactly where we are.

He walked into the mountains
like a man who's on his way
to kill a dog. He didn't stop.
She closed her eyes to let a drop
of calamine run down her cheeks.
Somewhere sandy, somewhere soft,
that's what he had promised her.
She wrote a letter home in her head.
There's nothing here but rock,
she began,
and his Hi-Tec Hi-Tec Hi-Tec
footsteps in the snow.

Selima Hill

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books Encountered

Oscar Wilde. By RICHARD ELLMANN. Hamish Hamilton, £15.00.

A fine memorial to the late Professor Ellmann—comprehensive, compassionate, inquisitive, scholarly, and polished. Using unpublished material, it broadens the familiar picture, notably extending the Irish background and exploring the young Wilde's aesthetics. "Wilde had to live his life twice over, first in slow motion, than at top speed. During the first period he was a scapegrace, during the second a scapegoat."

Once More Around the Block: Familiar Essays. By JOSEPH EPSTEIN. W. W. Norton, £11.95, $18.50.

Another crackling collection by the editor of *The American Scholar*, full of jokes, sharp judgments, and linguistic purism. The self-mockery is what once would have been called "wry", i.e. subtly self-vindicating. Newcomers should imagine a hybrid of Lamb, Perelman, Thurber, and Miles Kington.

Essays in Honour of Elias Canetti. Edited by the CARL HANSER VERLAG. Translated by MICHAEL HULSE. André Deutsch, £19.95.

Originally published for Canetti's eightieth birthday two years ago, this *Festschrift* includes essays by John Bayley, Salman Rushdie, and Susan Sontag, as well as German writers and critics, plus scholars from Spain, Sweden, Poland, Italy, France, and Austria; also an account of how *Auto-da-Fé* was received when first published and translated. A masterly tribute.

The New History and the Old. By GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB. Harvard University Press, $20.00, £15.95.

"It may be that a new generation of historians, bored with the 'everyday life of common people' and the 'long-term structures' of geography and demography, may find a renewed excitement in the drama of events, the power of ideas, and the dignity of individuals—'not only in things that are trivial but in the things that really matter'." Brave words; but these eloquent collected and connected essays really propose a synthesis, not a return to Gibbon and Macaulay.

Philosophy of the Film: Epistemology, Ontology, Aesthetics. By IAN JARVIE. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £18.95.

Professor Jarvie sets himself five Orwellian rules: eschew recondite allusions, avoid jargon, be clear, don't dogmatise on aesthetics, and follow Plato, Berkeley, and Russell rather than Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. His "meta-rule" (break the rules if necessary) rather takes over; but he says sensible things, at length, on *Casablanca*, *Rashomon*, *Citizen Kane*, and Woody Allen.

Tobias Smollett: The Critical Heritage. Edited by LIONEL KELLY. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £27.95.

A high price for material which, bar the editor's work, is surely out of copyright: but a good addition to a useful series. It would be more useful still with quotations from modern critical studies, some of them in the bibliography. I imagine Smollett grinning.

How I Grew. By MARY MCCARTHY. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95.

Frank, reflective, slightly rambling reminiscences of childhood in Seattle, student life at Vassar, courtship and dud marriage in New York. The rambling is a deliberate, Proustian teasing out of memory, overlaid by possible projecting back—a very modern contrast with the better but more artful *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*.

Time to Explain: An Autobiography. By CHRISTOPHER MAYHEW. Hutchinson, £12.95.

Scholar (and Socialist) at Haileybury, Army Officer and SOE official, junior Minister to Ernest Bevin and anti-Stalin propagandist, Navy Minister who resigned under Wilson, Labour moderate and now Liberal peer, Lord Mayhew has an emblematic tale to tell, marred only by occasional forgetfulness—as of the "breath-takingly offensive" remark Evelyn Waugh made at their only meeting, in the "Phantom" private army.

Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Legend. By ERNEST SAMUELS. Harvard University Press, $25.00, £19.95.

The second half of Professor Samuels's mammoth biography, rebutting in particular accusations that Berenson altered picture attributions to facilitate sales, but documenting his marital hassles, rages, etc. He still emerges as a master. Among the 39 illustrations, the painting reproductions are lamentable.

Dance and Skylark: Fifty Years with Alastair Sim. By NAOMI SIM. Bloomsbury, £12.95.

Observant, humorous, admiring but realistic biography by the dome-headed actor's widow, telling more about her than about her loving, superbly talented, and very private spouse.

The Belles Lettres Papers. By CHARLES SIMMONS. Alison Press/ Secker & Warburg, £10.95.

Insider's (former editor of the *New York Times Book Review)* fantasy about a literary weekly taken over and overtaken by sharpie Big-Apple publishing, with office romances, hype, back-stabbing, and ludicrous Bardology. The characters have names like Lou Bodoni and are paper-thin—but the edge can draw blood.

Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement. By DAVID SIMPSON. Methuen, £25.00.

Professor Simpson (from Colorado) offers what he calls a "materialist" (i.e. *marxisant*) interpretation of the Grasmere sage, arguing that his poems are not only solitary and spiritual but social and political—e.g. suggesting that the word "relief" in *Alice Fell* may have parish welfare overtones. To me, where not rather obvious, the thesis seems far-fetched.

Breakdown: A Personal Crisis and a Medical Dilemma. By STUART SUTHERLAND. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95, paper £6.95.

Updated edition of the 1976 confessional that inspired Simon Gray's play *Melon*. The author is Professor of Experimental Psychology at Sussex, and his book is embarrassingly truthful and frighteningly vivid: the tight authorial control helps explain personal and communication difficulties, as well as suggesting its own fragility.

Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939. By JULIAN SYMONS. André Deutsch, £12.95.

A good layman's account of "modernism": beginning with Edward Marsh and Harriet Monroe, it takes in Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Joyce, and Eliot, *The Egoist* and the *Little Review*, then turns to the American tail of their comet, and to their fate. Some anecdotes, the rescue of extras like Conrad Aiken, and an interest in attendant "angels" may interest even experts.

Images of Destruction. By DAVID WIGODOR. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £4.95.

A manic-depressive's counterpart to *Breakdown*, above: an awkwardly written, but unbearably painful account of how the author, by the time he was forty, had in his own words "destroyed two successful careers, served a prison sentence, been made legally bankrupt, lost a treasured professional qualification, attempted to kill two people, and isolated myself from most of my family and friends". Group therapy has offered him hope.

R.M.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEATRE

Modern Dress, Old Hat

By Edward Pearce

THE THEATRE and simple foolishness are frequently close, never more so than in the production of an established classic. "Did you once see Shelley plain?" is a less optimistic question than one about seeing Shakespeare straight. The poetry is not enough in a generation essentially hostile to language. The time and place given for Hamlet and Rosalind are rarely acceptable to the fanciful pizza-cooks of production. Only opera under the vain and trivial administration of Sir John Tooley at Covent Garden has suffered more—*Fidelio* on stilts! (*Rheingold* at Bayreuth in the hands of Patrice Cheneau was set amid pit-wheels in the Ruhr.)

The impulse to intrude upon Shakespeare with Director's Theatre, whose trundling obsessions and prancing affectations weigh down the poet like iron, is a successor to Actor's Theatre which had its own fatuities. It is modified by Consultant's Theatre in which ready-cooked notions—Marxist, Freudian, Feminist, the buzz-truths of the hour—are force-fed to the text of a playwright contemporary with Michel de Montaigne. But then, how many directors have read Montaigne?

One cannot kick at all restyling, dearly as one would like to see a verse-preoccupied, unadorned Elizabethan production. There are distinctions to be made; *Twelfth Night*, for example, has twice been given independent London productions in the last few months: by the fashionable, critic-intimidating Cheek-by-Jowl company at the Donmar Warehouse, and by the rich, lavish, semi-commercial Royal Shakespeare Company (Stratford moving to the Barbican).

The Cheek-by-Jowl production, directed by Declan Donnellan, seemed simply to hate Shakespeare and sought to make as many significant and meaningful gestures as two fingers and theatrical conceit permit. "If music be the food of love" is greeted by Maria foghorning on a saxophone. Sir Toby is a Texan in wide hat, white suit and wide, white accent. Sir Andrew is an IQ 50, good ol' boy recruited from the rank and file of any lynch mob in the Mississippi Delta. Contrariwise, the Camp of Olivia speak polite, garden-party English, having been excused fatigues by Mr Donnellan. Why this should be so in Illyria I cannot say, any more than I can explain the characters falling flat on the floor, the rending of great tracts of text, or the turning of Sir Toby's quarrel with Sir Andrew into a fight with elaborately labelled whisky bottles.

I don't know what Declan Donnellan wanted to do except catch attention, something he manages very well by grabbing hold of the homosexual option available in the Antonio/Sebastian relationship—far more authentically seen as Romantic friendship with an unexpressed tinge of erotic feeling—and playing it as Queen's Theatre with a cuddling couple who could turn you prejudiced very quickly. Flaunting and vaunting homosexuality (not the subtle, clever sort) is not an *option* in this sort of theatre. Being part of the manifesto of outrage, it turns up as a fixed item on the menu like veal cutlet in an Italian restaurant.

Ultimately, though, it doesn't matter what Donnellan wants. It has nothing to do with Shakespeare, who is more than a charcoal cartoon for the director to fashion into a riot of significance, social relevance, and cross-eyed innovation. When Nahum Tate, conforming to comfortable popular taste, gave the darkest play ever written (*King Lear*) a happy ending, he was duly derided; he had derision coming. So—when he turns a lyric comedy, flecked with melancholy and containing some of the finest poetry in English, into a celebration of his own footling ego—does Donnellan.

THE RSC PRODUCTION, by contrast, has the sort of clever charm which would make a forward-looking stomach turn. It is set very beautifully (a serious lapse already) in a Greek island or town, identifiable to British theatre audiences who holiday in such places when they can. Most critics were reminded of Mykonos; I was inclined to see Lindos on Rhodes. But there, *chacun à son goût*.

The change of setting is valid. Geography, unlike poetry, was a hazy matter for most Elizabethans. Shakespeare tended to put Italian-named characters down in places like Bohemia or Illyria about which he knew gloriously little, and set them speaking English. *Twelfth Night* has, thank God, escapist tendencies. It asks for a far-away, faintly exotic Levantine place in which to set up Italianate Englishmen to play against women as English as cucumber sandwiches, and generally to get on with the show. A fancy, sparkling-white, island Greece will do very nicely—especially as it gives Anthony Sher a chance to play Malvolio as Archbishop Makarios in buttercup tights.

There are defects and weak performances—an Orsino (Donald Sumpter) as limp and perfunctory as a flannel dipped in lukewarm water, a Viola/Cesario (Harriet Walter) with a touch of the plucky lady lacrosse-player about her, and in Anthony Sher's Malvolio we go clean back in time to Actor's Theatre. Sher, a South African with application and talent in unstable proportions, has a lot to give. But we have to understand that with Sher we are back with Sir Donald Wolfit, a double-jointed, speeded-up, mocking and flailing Wolfit, without the old man's Churchillian pomposity but with the same carnivorous, team-despising presence on stage, very old-fashioned, *an actaw, laddie,* and no messing about.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bill Alexander, the director here, likes nuance and refinement. Antonio and Sebastian *are* drawn to one another, Antonio knowing, Sebastian not; we are given to understand this, but nothing is done to make us wince and Mr Alexander famous.

Sir Toby is played as a coarse conman getting by on his wits. The part at all times hangs betwixt sympathy and dislike. This Sir Toby is at the dislikable end. He would be one of those marginal chancers raising money for the Conservatives before they are arrested. Sir Andrew is a grass-green innocent, a lame self-doubting shadow—funny in a way, but funny-pitiful.

Mr Alexander dithers happily between tragic and comic elements. He has an angelic Maria in Pippa Guard—too good and psychologically right, with the proper vivacity for this cousin of Beatrice's, to get the notices she deserves—but it is harder than ever to see why she would want to marry *this* one-jump-ahead-of-the-receiver Toby.

The tragedy acts out Feste's description of Malvolio in confinement, "*Truly, madam, he holds Beelzebub at the stave's end*", in a way which suggests that the stave has snapped. Malvolio (an insistence of the actor, or Mr Alexander's idea?) is noisily mad in a way which draws a lot of attention to Anthony Sher. It all hangs rather perilously between a moving pity and comic business. The overt jolly cruelty of the Elizabethans, who set dogs on to bears as well as writing sonnets, leaves a nation of compassionate souls with tin ears understandably jarred by the treatment of Malvolio. Lacking their rough complacency, we usually go overboard the other way. Sher's fraught freak simply goes crazy in spades.

The production, then, doesn't quite work. The limp premiers are more remote than usual from a comic plot which seizes power and declares a state of emergency, and Sher is allowed out on his own in a way never wise. Yet it falls honourably short. There are beautiful things in the bouquet of inconsistencies: Maria, for one; a sweet-singing Feste permitted the Morley tune, another. And anyway a production full of contradictions does no harm to a play which in all its manifest glory is full of them itself.

WHERE DIRECTOR'S INTRUSION really works is with plays which while famous aren't actually very good. There is no point in putting on a Mounted Police *Hamlet*, a black *Macbeth*, or a *Measure for Measure* intended to explain the Central American situation, because the plays don't need it. To return to the happy metaphor of Italian cuisine: dough needs olives, artichokes and salami, good pasta requires a single simple sauce. Indeed, the spaghetti which carries the whole pizza mix on top is known very aptly as "Putanesca"—whore's spaghetti—a point for every intrusive young director to bear severely in mind.

Two Gentlemen of Verona is distinctly dough, needing all the help it can get. Its incredible plot, whose workings show like the Pompidou Centre and which is full of turns and changes-of-heart taking place at right angles, would not stand up in a straight production. Proteus and Valentine, two affable, unremarkable young men, are turned into adversaries when Proteus in an unheralded fit of Sir Jasperish melodrama decides at the flip of an instinct to abandon the Ronald Reagan part of hero's best friend for the Errol Flynn role of chap who steals best friend's best girl. Throw in a couple of chorus-line heroines, a Duke who has to move from chain-mail despot to understanding father in ten lines of plot rationalisation, and you have early Shakespeare—lots of fun, a scatter of good lines, but something which could best be done by marionettes.

The Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, once thought rather elementary and doing its duty by O-Level candidates but lately much galvanised by Ian Talbot, its Artistic Director, has taken the *Two Gentlemen* and, breaking rules of time and place as vigorously as Declan Donnellan, has made it work.

Ironically, very ironically, they use two of Donnellan's devices—a saxophone (mercifully *after* the Schubert of *Who is Sylvia?*) and homosexuality (the band of outlaws are cross-dressers previously playing in the hotel band). Both bomb totally—in the American sense of falling comprehensively on their faces. But here these are forgivable lapses in a fast-skating production which puts zip into limp and amuses us through the impossibilities of the plot.

It seems that while with a saxophone you can't go right in Shakespeare, with a setting in the Edwardian period you can't go wrong. I recall an American production of *Much Ado* shown on TV over here about ten years ago. It involved the excellent Sam Waterston as a wry, corner-of-the-mouth, Ivy-League Benedict. It was shot in soft focus in a rambling

Left & Right

IT IS *impossible to dismiss complaints from the Left that ours is a predominantly Right-wing Press. But there is the counterbalance—admittedly inadequate—that ours is a predominantly Left-wing theatre.*

Why this should be is something that has long puzzled me. Reasons that have suggested themselves are that successful playwrights tend to be young, with their powers, or at least their reputations, declining as they grow older; that devotees of "serious" theatre, as distinct from musicals and television spin-offs, tend also to be young and to come from large towns rather than from the more conservative country; and that theatre folk, dedicated to lives of illusion and pretence, are naturally prone to believe both in Utopian dreams and in sinister conspiracies that frustrate their realisation.

ONCE AGAIN, **as in past years, I have hoped for at least one new play that would assert that a woman's proper place is in the home; that our police are all wonderful; and that Neil Kinnock is wicked.**

I do not, in fact, subscribe to any of these beliefs, let me hasten to say; but at least such a play would be a welcome change from so many full of implacable contempt for the male sex, of unreasoning hatred of the police, and of vicious denigration of poor old Mrs Thatcher.

Francis King
in the SUNDAY TELEGRAPH (*London*)

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Southern house and park, and set in "the Era of Good Feeling" (W. D. Howells's term for the TR-Taft, pre-1914 age). I never saw the reviews, but for me it worked beautifully.

In precisely the same way, the Regent's Park *Two Gentlemen*, set down amid the fancy lights and wicker chairs of an Edwardian seaside hotel heavily reminiscent of *You Never Can Tell*, becomes a Play Pleasant itself. The absurdities are glossed over. What would be a heaving-and-straining after effect if imposed on a strong play becomes a diversion to help a weak one along. I wouldn't want to see a Mafioso Duke in *As You Like It*, but here the clipped Palermo style gives the dull parent a certain flair. Thurio, the rejected suitor of the Duke's daughter, is a dreary character—but play him in blazer and a short haircut like a South African Rugby international in a sulk, and out of the negative material you get amusement.

It all works. One leaves the theatre with an affection for the play. Ian Talbot, unlike Donnellan, has a purpose which we can understand. His changings and jazzings-up aren't intended *pour épater* anything, and instead of kicking the ordinary rub-along middle-class audience on the knee with engineered outrage, he is helping them to get pleasure out of a play which they would not otherwise have taken. There is a low, clear, populist objective which the forward-looking theatre (like the Armpit of Bermondsey, the Excise Department in Maida Vale, and the much admired Clinical Death Theatre Group at Chalk Farm) would spew out of their mouths in the manner of St John the Divine.

Directorial intervention can take another form, as is shown by *The Three Sisters*, now transferred from the Greenwich Theatre to the Aldwych. Elijah Moshinsky keeps Chekhov's characters, in the manner of a fussy dresser with an eye on period plates, in long dresses, braid-edged coats, and hussars' uniforms; equipping them with parasols, soft hats, hard collars, and whatever the age of Chekhov demanded. He simply shifts the psychology of all the characters forward 90 years. This Olga grieves outward; this Masha has sexual experience; this Natasha is a shouting hateful bitch. Nuance is out. The hanging-out of emotions to dry is in. Only when Vershinin uncanonically knocks Masha to the floor does it go a trifle far. But, however we may regret our own unsubtlety mirrored in this production, it does what no change of costume has ever done; it gives us a modern-*life* classic, something altogether different.

The Refuse Bags

At every gate,
luckless black cats
grotesquely bloated.

They're for the sudden jerked scruff,
the headlong hurtle into the doom-truck.

Once, the cheery clatter of bins,
flung lids whuff-whuffing clownishly
before speeding it up to sudden stop.

And honest programme-music—
the tipped bin describing its contents
in telling tinkles, clunks and thuds.

Now it's furtive men in gloves,
jeans, noiseless trainers.
They come and go. Even
the dogs don't hear.

Our street is left ominously clean.
No innocent little heaps of spilt ash,
no orange peel or skittering milk-tops.
Sealed sacks take all.

They have surfaced among us
to tout their smooth oblivion.
Still shine with water of Lethe.
A wet-look, that smirks. There's no enormity
that can't be discreetly despatched
in a black plastic bag.

A. H. Snow

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTROVERSY

The Conservative Contradiction

Misreading the Spirit of Adam Smith—By GEORGE WATSON

Conservatives & Competition

WE ARE OFTEN TOLD nowadays that private and competitive enterprise is conservative. But we are never told why.

The claim is not ancient—among Anglo-American intellectuals, "Neo-Conservatism" is only about a decade old. But since Margaret Thatcher first became leader of the British Conservative Party in 1975, "competition" has become a prominent conservative slogan, echoed by the Reagan Presidency since 1981. The United States admittedly lacks any continuous tradition of political conservatism, whether under that name or any other: largely, perhaps, because it has never had a Church establishment or a monarchy—at least not an hereditary one. But in Britain all that is different. Mrs Thatcher is even said to have read Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) which, though over two hundred years old, is still the classic handbook of the competitive spirit; and her victory at the polls in 1979, the first of three, has made Britain once again something of a guide-dog, as in the last century, to the politics of the Western world.

But just where that guide-dog is leading us, and whether we are blind to follow it, is a question to be seriously pondered. At all events I shall stick to the word "competition" here, rather than "capitalism"—not just because capitalism is by now an old-fashioned socialist term and hopelessly outdated in debate, but because it is (and always was) so utterly misleading. All economies, after all—and by no means least the socialist economies of Eastern Europe—necessarily depend on the control of capital investment: so that the implied notion that such control distinguishes the private economies of the West from the state economies of the East is frankly absurd. In the end, the East-West economic argument is about monopoly versus competition. And it divides into two, where Neo-Conservatives are concerned. Do the conservative parties of the Western world have any genuine historical commitment (as they have so often assured us since 1975) to the competitive principles of the free market? And whether they have or not, is free-market competition ever likely in practice to be conservative in its social effects? I shall look at these two questions in turn.

GEORGE WATSON *is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge and author of "Politics & Literature in Modern Britain" and "The Idea of Liberalism" (Macmillan, 1977, 1985).*

THE HISTORICAL COMMITMENT of the British Conservative Party to competition at home and to free trade abroad was brief and slight before Mrs Thatcher assumed its leadership. And no wonder, since it was free trade that destroyed the Victorian Tories for decades as a party of government. "I cannot answer these arguments", Sir Robert Peel is said to have whispered to a parliamentary colleague in the Commons in 1846, when as Tory Prime Minister he listened to the Liberal opposition clamouring for cheap food and a repeal of the Corn Laws. That repeal led to a Tory split that left the Party without a clear and stable majority in the Commons for a generation and more, till Disraeli formed his second ministry in 1874.

The trouble was that a party based on hereditary landed privilege and dependent on heavily-protected agricultural prices had no arguments left in an age of widening suffrage. It had lost the debate over competition; and it could no longer enforce protection by a discredited electoral system that had once largely excluded the urban vote. In 1848, two years after the Tory split over free trade, John Stuart Mill won a crushing intellectual victory with his *Principles of Political Economy*. It was a triumph so total that by the 1870s most Conservatives were content to forget their traditional objections to competition in order to keep any chance of office at all. Protection had no arguments left. In 1876 *The Times* of London celebrated the hundredth anniversary of *The Wealth of Nations* with the congratulatory remark (1 June 1876), "We are all, in profession at least, free traders now".

Even Disraeli, who had presumed to advocate protection four years earlier in opposition (in his Crystal Palace speech of 1872), found it electorally convenient to forget about it

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when he achieved office two years later. The nation would simply not have swallowed an imperial tariff. Everyone knew the Tory leader was an enemy of the competition principle. He had split his own party in 1846 out of hatred of free trade; he had spent years in the political wilderness calling for import duties to save the landed gentry; and he held that the everlasting task of Conservative leadership (as he once wrote to Lord Derby) was "to uphold the aristocratic settlement of this country", which he called "the only question at stake, however manifold may be the forms which it assumes". Conservatives were hostile to commerce and the free market, and notoriously the party of big public spending: extravagance, as a recent Tory biographer of Disraeli has admitted, was "a stock accusation made by Liberal economists against Conservative budgets".[1]

Few 19th-century Conservatives, then, would have had a good word to say for the spirit of Reaganism-Thatcherism. They hated the prospect of a "*shopocracy*" as something crude and vulgar. In *Coningsby* (1844) Disraeli openly derided proposals of his more liberally inclined colleagues for a modern Conservative association with "a banker for its chairman, and a brewer for its vice-president" (IV.5). Old wealth might be conservative; but everyone knew there was nothing conservative about new wealth. Why should there be?

The positives of 19th-century Conservatives were centralised powers for Church and State, and the idea of big government was entirely natural to them. To many Victorian minds they looked rather like socialists in our own century, though more backward-looking in their centralism. Above all, they respected authority.

> "A Conservative has reverence for government in the abstract [Mill wrote in a letter of October 1831]. They are duly sensible that it is good for a man to be ruled; to submit both his body and his mind to the guidance of a higher intelligence and virtue."

Such statism involved tariffs and, in Europe at least, a devotion to hereditary privilege and Church establishments. No wonder if socialists like Sidney and Beatrice Webb, by the end of the century, saw the Tories as their natural allies. And free trade had hardly been won before Conservatives threatened it afresh.

By 1885 Lord Randolph Churchill (Winston's father) was toying with a new version of protection to be called "Fair Trade"; there was a determined movement within the Conservative Party in the 1880s and 1890s back to protection, blocked by its moderate leader Lord Salisbury for fear of driving his new Liberal-Unionist allies into Gladstone's arms; and when Joseph Chamberlain, as second man in Balfour's Tory government, declared for tariffs in 1903, he sent the young Winston Churchill across the floor of the Commons and into the Liberal Party. With the Liberal victory of 1905-6, Balfour had to fight, in opposition, to keep a divided Tory Party away from protection, if only because it was a notorious vote-loser. He failed; and by 1909 the Conservatives were openly an anti-competitive party. Beatrice Webb had already welcomed their shift to protectionism in her diary for February 1906: a "policy of state control and increase of taxation", she wrote, was something for all socialists to rejoice in.[2]

Tariffs marked a return to the Tory tradition. No 19th-century Conservative government had ever been notable for encouraging competition or the trading spirit. Disraeli's Cabinet of 1874 had, it was noted, included only one member of the new commercial classes—R. A. Cross, a Lancashire banker who became Home Secretary, an office with little to do with economic policy. Tories were the party of old wealth; and old wealth naturally fears competition. Their terror of an extended suffrage was after all an intelligible one. Salisbury, no die-hard Tory, wrote as a young Member of Parliament in the *Quarterly Review* of 1864 that

> ". . . an extension of the suffrage to the working classes means that upon a question of taxation or expenditure, or upon a measure vitally affecting commerce, two day-labourers shall outvote Baron Rothschild."

He concluded darkly that the popular suffrage proposed by the Liberals—one man, one vote—was no more than "the dream of a lunatic". Many years later, in his 1883 essay on "Disintegration", he drew an alarming picture of the newly atomised world that competitive industrialism must bring upon Britain, if allowed to do so, and called on the Conservative opposition to Gladstone's ministry to return to

> ". . . that spirit of the old constitution which held the nation together as a whole, and levelled its forces at objects of national import, instead of splitting it into a bundle of unfriendly and distrustful fragments. . . ."[3]

Unfriendly and distrustful fragments are what competitive enterprises naturally are. What is worse, as Adam Smith had long since seen, they usually threaten hereditary privilege. Competition is commonly radical in its social effects, as everyone understood. Salisbury's strictures against social disintegration in 1883 sound remarkably like Lady Bracknell's a dozen years later, in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), where she mercilessly identified trade with radicals and Toryism with a threatened hereditary class. "Who was your father?" she imperiously asks her future son-in-law:

> "He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy? . . ."

That is hitting back at the commercial spirit of the Liberals, in a cheerful sort of way. Wilde may carry no heavy guns as a political analyst; but at least he could see (as his audience could) that the free market is radical to the point of vulgarity,

[1] Robert Blake, *Disraeli* (1966), pp. 278, 554.
[2] Beatrice Webb, *Our Partnership* (1948), p. 332.
[3] *Lord Salisbury on Politics* (ed. Paul Smith, 1972), pp. 183-84, 342.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and that it would need the heavy imposition of state privilege, Tory or socialist, to keep it out.

So much by implication. The trouble is that Conservatives were notably weak in intellectuals before the 1970s, so that their anti-competitive argument is singularly hard to document. Until just the other day, conservatism was a disposition of mind rather than an active and exploring idea.

I remember Vera Brittain telling how someone during the 1951 British election, which Churchill narrowly won, asked her hopefully: "Do you think we'll get the Socialists out this time?" And when she answered crushingly that she was a Socialist herself, the visitor looked startled for a moment and then said: "Oh well, of course, you're an intellectual, aren't you? . . ."

Intellectuals in that age were not usually Conservatives; and if they were, they did not usually intellectualise their conservatism. Conservatism was something they had always believed, or something they fell into after they had ceased to believe in anything else. A century ago and more, in 1875, Lord Derby wrote to Disraeli that Conservatives were "weakest among the intellectual classes: as is natural. . . ."[4] That was one Conservative writing to another. Since 1975 intellectual Conservatives have actively challenged that assumption, even overturned it: such has been the recent and astonishing achievement of their think-tanks, their conferences and their discussion-groups. They have thought it all out. The question is whether, having thought it all out, they have thought it out right.

The ideological transformation we have watched since the 1970s has been nearly total. By now Conservatives, or rather Neo-Conservatives, are the most committed and articulate ideologues of the age. In that highly articulate commitment, "the New Right" often reminds one of "the New Left" of the 1960s: not surprisingly, since some of them are in fact old Neo-Marxists of the 1960s who have rapidly changed their coats from red to blue. Their conferences, like the rally "Beyond 1984" chaired by Lord Chalfont in London in March 1985, remind one in their adversarial fervour of old Marxist teach-ins, except that they are better organised, better publicised, and far better wined and fed. They have their journals (perhaps even this one); they have their gurus. And "the New Right" even resembles "the New Left" of twenty years ago in its sense of social indeterminacy, though in reverse order. The 1960s *marxisant* was most characteristically a *haut bourgeois* trying to look and sound populist; any trace of regional dialect usually turning out, on investigation, to be a phonetic affectation. His modern mirror-image, the Neo-Conservative, is more often a *petit bourgeois* trying to look *haut*. Julian Critchley has revealed (*The Observer*, 22 April 1985) how as a new Tory member of the Commons in 1959 he was reproached by a colleague for wearing suede shoes rather than leather—suede nowadays exciting not a moment's remark, he adds, in Mrs Thatcher's Conservative parliamentary party. That is an interesting nuance. The Neo-Conservative may, in his own pretension at least, be some sort of *haut bourgeois*, or even something more; but he is still a bourgeois. Reaganism-Thatcherism is openly a business ethic. It imagines itself the inheritor of the tradition of Smith and even of Gladstone; and it does not know—or wish to be told—that both Adam Smith and William Gladstone believed the wealth of the nation should be used not only to profit the rich but to succour the poor.

The social market, as Dr David Owen of the Social Democrats loves to call it, is a Victorian Liberal idea. It is in Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859)—a book that still deserves to be read. In May 1876 Gladstone himself (then leader of the Liberal opposition) addressed a dinner of the Political Economy Club in London to celebrate the first centenary of *The Wealth of Nations*. The first virtue of that great book, as Gladstone reminded his hearers, was to see that, for the individual, "wealth is not the highest of all objects", and the greatest of all Smith's ideas had been to use the new wealth of competitive economies to alleviate poverty—

> "The great glory of the science of which we look on him as the main founder is not that it has made a number of rich men richer than they were before, but that it has mastered the beneficial and blessed secret of mitigating the lot of those who were in hard and biting circumstances, and of giving comfort and even reasonable abundance not to scores, or to hundreds, or to thousands, but to millions to whom before their outward life was a burthen. . . ."

—adding that "the operations of commerce are not confined to the material ends".[5]

In other words, Adam Smith is less the father of monetarism than of welfare; and the notion that the great classical economists believed only in thrift and self-help cannot be sustained (as Gladstone well knew) by a reading of their texts. That is more than the Neo-Conservative of the 1980s knows, or wants to know. But then there is a difference between reading *The Wealth of Nations*, that profoundly generous and liberal book, and paying due attention to what it says. "No society can surely be flourishing and happy", Adam Smith wrote in his masterpiece (I.viii),

> "of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, cloath and lodge the whole body of the people should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, cloathed and lodged."

That is more than socialism offers, in any Soviet labour camp —or even in the cities of the USSR. But it is what the classi-

[4] *Lord Salisbury on Politics*, p. 2.

[5] *Revised Report of the Proceedings at the Dinner of 31st May 1876*, The Political Economy Club London, 1876), p. 42; *The Times* (5 June 1876).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

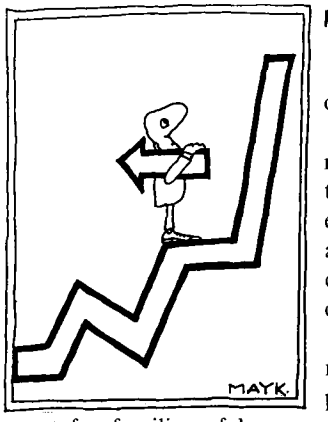
cal economists demanded, in what Adam Smith memorably called the "great society" (IV, ix).

HAVE CONSERVATIVES, one wonders, in the present age, truly forgotten their statist and Disraelian roots? Surely not: and it is already apparent that between the competitive slogans and the statist realities of Reaganism-Thatcherism an ever-widening abyss yawns. Monetary control is commonly offered as a device characteristic of the minimal state; and to the extent that it is based on lower public spending, it might be. But we have not had lower public spending. Fiscal control by unremitting centralised power is surely statist in principle; and we are assured both in Washington and in London that control of the money supply is essential to the conservative case. High defence spending is statist; and for so long as conservatives insist on "Star Wars" or *Trident*, it will be hard to reconcile their defence policies with monetary restraint. The law to abolish the metropolitan boroughs, and notably the Greater London Council, forced through the British Parliament in 1984, introduced a new and alarming principle into British politics—the right of central government to abolish elected bodies when it knows it cannot by open election win a majority in them.

Since then the Thatcher government has shown more and more of its centralising claws. In March 1985 Norman Fowler, as Secretary of State for Social Services, announced that immigration rules would be tightened to stop unrestricted access to Britain by doctors and dentists, mostly non-whites from the New Commonwealth—and all that on the highly protectionist ground that the United Kingdom was "essentially self-sufficient in its supply". The announcement followed intense pressure from the British Medical Association, and it was one they openly welcomed.

And since 1979 the Thatcher government has generally *increased* the role of the state in the British economy, with personal taxation higher, in real terms, than under any socialist government. It boasts "Buying British" as official policy, as if Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain had returned from the grave, or from whatever place Tory leaders spend eternity; while the Exchequer boasts of the "good investment" (as Nigel Lawson in 1984 called it in the House of Commons) of paying out thousands of millions to defeat the Scargill coal strike. The privatisation of British Gas, like that of British Telecom before it, will openly preserve its monopolistic character. An expensive Falklands war is followed by a still more expensive Falklands peace. It was a Tory member of Parliament (now a peer), Jock Bruce-Gardyne, who openly admitted in his book *Mrs Thatcher's First Administration* (1984) that government spending and personal tax are both higher, as a percentage of national income, than ever before in history. No wonder he had to go to the House of Lords; and Samuel Brittan tells us (". . . and the Same Old Problems", ENCOUNTER, April 1985) that no one reading his book "will have any excuse for identifying the Premier's policies and ideas with free-market economy"—however much she and her circle may be fond of quoting Adam Smith or Friedrich von Hayek.

The Social Effects of Competition



THE REAGAN-THATCHER camp will talk of competition, then, but only occasionally deliver it.

But, as conservatives, they may after all be entirely right to be suspicious of its social effects. Can anyone think of any social effect of economic competition that is likely to be conservative?

"Conservative" here means mindful of traditional and patriotic values. It means respect for families of known and hallowed lineage; for the well-tried opinions of one's elders; for privileges sanctioned by time; for religious values enshrined in familiar forms like age-old (and above all established) Churches; and for tribal loyalties of race, language or culture. If that is what conservatism is about, then it merits something more than a sneer from its bitterest enemies; and even the radical should be prepared to admit that any society needs a party to embody such views. The West has plenty to conserve, and plenty that is worth conserving.

The tragic fact is that in Anglo-America today there is no such party, and many conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic know that there is none. In *The Meaning of Conservatism* (1980), largely written before Mrs Thatcher's first election victory, Roger Scruton, an academic philosopher, warned his own leaders against the aggressive spirit of commercial competition, that ancient and traditional enemy of all conservative values. And he was surely right as well as Right: commerce is, and always was, the enemy of conservatism. Whatever its merits, they are not conservative merits. Economic growth plainly threatens the traditional values of small, staid communities with its motorways, its supermarkets and the potential corruptions of the mass media. And competition is just as clearly the enemy of hereditary wealth, unless that wealth is carefully or luckily invested in a portfolio of stocks and shares. It threatens old firms with young firms; established interests with economic gate-crashers; aristocrats with *parvenus*. All that is clear. And yet Scruton remains a bold, unheeded voice in the wilderness, and conservatives do not seem to regard commerce nowadays as it plainly deserves to be regarded—at least not out loud. No doubt it can only be a matter of time before they do.

SOME DEFENCE can be attempted for the consistency of the Neo-Conservative case. It is sometimes said, for example, that the great private economies of the West are by their nature nepotistical, developing a tradition of dynastic privilege much as landed property once did. One Ford follows another off the production-line; in New York publishing, one edition of Scribner follows another, much as there has been a John Murray in London publishing since Byron's day. In fact a popular TV series on "the New Rich" is called *Dynasty*.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commerce, in other words—however radical in its origins—can easily grow conservative by hereditary right; and modern businesses can function much like the great landed estates of medieval and early modern times, it is said, in preserving the life-styles of families which, if not exactly ancient, are quickly absorbed by private schools and exclusive clubs into a traditional mode of life. A *shopocracy* can turn into a *poshocracy* before you can say Norman Podhoretz or Peregrine Worsthorne, and long before you can spell them; and in Mrs Thatcher's Britain, even if you started in a grammar-school or worse, you can become a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, a member of the Athenaeum Club, and perhaps even a life peer, and try to look as if your father never sold brushes. Competitive enterprise is like feudalism, in this hopeful view, and today's *parvenu* is tomorrow's peer.

But is it? The point about feudalism was that there was only so much land; and barring convulsions like the Norman Conquest, those who had it had it; and they could ordinarily count on bequeathing it to their heirs. Modern commercial competition is not like that. It is simply not true that there is only so much business. Economic growth, when it happens—and in the West it mostly does—means that there is more of it all the time. True, a new professional class can hope to shore up its position in tenured jobs, especially for its younger sons, which may explain the modest middle-class vogue for careers in the public service or in academe. But though professors may be secure, no lawyer or business executive can be certain that next year will give him what last year gave. Competition is socially radical in a genuinely radical way—fundamentally so, and all the way down to the bottom. It forces individuals, as nothing else does, to try and to keep on trying: it is hostile to the existing order through and through. It is not like feudalism, or anything else.

As for nepotism, in the larger sense, or the right of the rich to bequeath to relatives their wealth and even their jobs, it remains entirely unclear that private enterprise in the long run will do that as reliably or efficiently as socialism. The great state economies of Eastern Europe and the Far East are highly nepotistical. Stalin's son (who died accidentally in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp during the War) was a privileged being, destined, in his own view, for high office in the Soviet state; and his death was an extreme embarrassment to his captors, who fully understood his standing in the USSR and feared Soviet reprisals against German prisoners in Russia. Kim Il Sung, the leader of North Korea, now in his mid-70s, is one under whose "radiant guidance" (if the North Korean press is to be believed) "inextricably involved problems are effortlessly solved", and he seems likely to be succeeded by his son in true monarchical style. High Party members in the Soviet Union commonly find comfortable jobs for their relatives in the state hierarchy, while their children lead privileged lives; and Communist Romania is notoriously run as a family concern, the dictator's wife and son holding Cabinet posts and creaming off profits as merrily as in any old-style banana-republic in Latin America. All this is far better than Eton.

If hereditary privilege is what the true conservative yearns for, then socialism can give it to him. In fact socialism has given it to him. And it can give it far more reliably than what is vaguely and ambiguously called capitalism. The competitive capitalist may bear an ancient and honoured name in business, as Scribner of New York and John Murray of London bear honoured names. But they have to fight to keep it, for so long as publishing is a competitive business. How hard do the privileged directors of the Moscow State Publishing House have to fight?

What reasons here do Conservatives have to persevere? One is that competitive commerce is what most people want, as any busy supermarket shows; and electoral politics is about giving people what they want. Another is that the New Right, since 1975, has been an answer to the New Left, and the New Left was socialist and centralising; anything the New Left wanted, you may be sure the New Right does not want. Neo-Conservatism is a classic case of the adversarial principle in politics—at least in its rhetoric. If the New Left was against old imperial commitments like Viet Nam or the Falklands, the New Right will be infallibly for them, even though they are only doubtfully compatible with monetary restraint. If the Left is for a nuclear freeze, then the Right is against it—even if, again, it is only doubtfully compatible with monetary restraint. Anything the Left wants, the Right must declare it does not want; anything the Left was once against, like the Viet Nam war or the British Empire, the Right must declare itself for. There were those on both sides of the Atlantic who noisily refused to see the film *Gandhi*, convinced as they were (in the absence of all evidence) that any film on such a subject could only be anti-imperial.

And so, of course, the New Right must proclaim itself, however self-contradictorily, for competitive enterprise as well as for high defence spending. The last thing it wants to be told is that it cannot have both and will have to choose. It is not in a mood to listen. It is too eager to pay off old scores from the '60s—to punish those Marxist intellectuals who so outrageously rejoiced in the defeat and humiliation of their native lands, who openly preferred demos to debate and political violence to argument and the life of mind. The New Right has hardly noticed how much of a mirror-image of the Old Left it has become; it is still too busy resenting the whole thing.

But the simple truth is that there is *nothing* conservative about competition, and a few are beginning to notice that there is not. It is monopoly that is socially conservative, whether public or private; competition is radical to the point of vulgarity. The present rulers of Anglo-America may be as little concerned about vulgarity as the directors of *Dynasty*. But some of their followers may be thinking otherwise: the Westminster "Wets" who oppose Mrs Thatcher from within her own party, for example, or philosophers like Professor Scruton concerned about the dizzying forward march of commercial values. The contradiction at the heart of Neo-Conservatism is one that events themselves are about to

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expose—as an Eastern bloc under socialism grows more and more fungus on its mouldering social edifices, and as a competitive West looks ever brasher in its radical chic.

To visit East Germany, a West German recently told me, is rather like visiting a genteel maiden aunt who is slowly fading away. "Once poverty is well distributed", the Foreign Minister of Viet Nam recently remarked, "there is no social injustice. If there is no social injustice, there is stability." That is the official Communist view. Communism spreads poverty out thin, like sour margarine. Competition, by contrast, works to abolish it.

All competition except competition among labourers, as Mill sagely remarked in the *Principles* of 1848, "is for the benefit of the labourers, by cheapening the articles they consume" (IV.vii.7). By now ordinary men and women on both sides of the Iron Curtain have noticed Mill's point. They have seen that our political philosophies of Left and Right are wildly misdescribed, that their contents differ strikingly from their labels: and if the real liberals of Anglo-America allow others to filch credit for the undoubted social triumphs of competitive enterprise, past and to come, then they will fail as liberal democrats and deserve to fail. That, more or less, is what happened to Walter Mondale's disastrous bid for the American Presidency in 1984.

COMPETITION is a fundamentally anti-conservative idea, as much as ever. It is not just that competitive enterprise has its radical aspects: it is radical altogether; there is nothing about it that is not radical. That truth is history and prediction all at once: the spirit of Adam Smith has already, over the past century and more, transformed the traditional social patterns of Western Europe and North America, as it will surely continue to transform them. But it is also a truth for the present age—and one fit to dismiss into limbo the flimsy constructs of a tradition of political thought, at once socialist and anti-socialist, that it has taken political philosophers over a century of painful theorising to erect.

Antenatal

i

No trace of gills,
but not yet human,
the preposterous miracle
nods a massive head,
dark-veined, glowing.
Blunt, translucent fingers
fanned like seaweed fronds
confer a blessing.

ii

This grey and white sketch
of sectioned torso,
the monstrous uterus
an opaque, sack-like,
usurping presence,
is a lost Magritte
provisionally entitled
My Secret Life.

iii

The child in the chicken-brick
sleeps, unaware
that the lifted lid—
umbilically hinged,
cradling placenta—
is an artist's fiction:
the real way out
will prove more hazardous.

iv

These squirming babies,
freshly delivered,
held out in huge hands,
slit-eyed and slippery-wet,
are like refugees
recently scooped
from the South China Sea,
mercifully alive.

Peter Norman

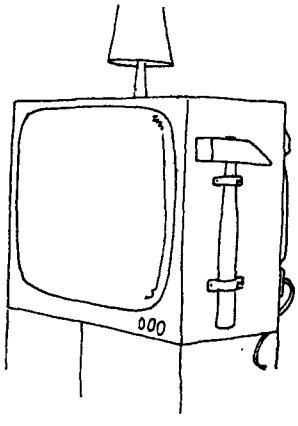
PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEDIA

Embattled Images

By Herb Greer

> *". . . a state of affairs where every reporter is assumed to be a disembodied seraph free from any political influence within the state or society. . . ."*
>
> **The Annan Report** *(1977)*



IT IS ONE THING to write about the pretensions and sins of the media seraphs; trying to approach these creatures directly is another sort of experience. One feels like Owen Glendower calling spirits from the vasty deep—the answers which come back are sometimes very curious indeed. When the Irangate affair was getting under way I was struck by an item on Channel 4 News. It covered a press conference at the White House and said that American reporters were giving the President credit for his performance. This remark was illustrated by a general shot of TV reporters on the White House lawn, reading their copy to various cameras. There followed a close-up bit of commentary from Sam Donaldson of ABC, a notoriously corrosive reporter who has on more than one occasion made his loathing of Ronald Reagan very clear. His on-camera lucubration was in the usual vein, sneering at the President, and sourly implying with choice phrases such as "He learned his lines" that the President had staged a phoney theatrical show for the media. What attracted my attention was that this totally contradicted the editorial statement. Was this Channel 4 irony?

I rang Stewart Purvis, Editor of Channel 4 News. He would not speak to me. The rule was: questions in writing. I complied. Why had Purvis chosen for the item a reporter who was obviously hostile to Reagan and contradicted Channel 4's commentary? Did this reflect an editorial slant? I mentioned other pointers in this direction: the medical amateur employed to diagnose senility in Reagan, while sitting in a London studio 3,000 miles away and basing his analysis on a slip of the tongue in a high-pressure debate. Then there was that report from CBS's *60 Minutes*, a cooked-up montage of TV- and film-clips which purported to prove, nothing less, that the President could not tell reality from fantasy. Evidence? He quoted film lines in his speeches. In America, where journalistic arrogance can achieve a sort of self-ordained apotheosis,[1] viewers' common sense will discount such partisan rubbish as cheapshot entertainment. Why drag it across the Atlantic and present it in Britain as a serious item of news? Did this betoken anti-Presidential (or even anti-American) policy at Channel 4?

Stewart Purvis's letter of reply stonewalled my query, accusing me of selecting isolated incidents to prove a point; after all, Donaldson had been hostile to President Carter too. Furthermore, signs of Reagan's senility or "his grasp on reality" were live election issues. Senility had, indeed, been discussed during the Reagan-Mondale election (invariably on the same superficial level as the Channel 4 item), but outside the United States the more alarming accusation—not "gauging" Reagan's grasp on reality, but denying it altogether—had not been aired during the election campaign. Was Purvis being disingenuous? Surely not. (Perhaps a slip of the pen? a sign of editorial senility?)

His letter affirmed that the policy of Channel 4 News is to "report on events in Washington with the same objective and impartial approach which characterises our coverage on major issues all over the world". That explained much. One had only to recall the heavily anti-American coverage of Nicaragua, and the caveats attached to broadcasts from South Africa (never to items from the Third World or the Eastern Bloc, where censorship is often more severe). Q.E.D., and thanks for the explanation.

THE MILLS OF the BBC's News and Current Affairs are slow but inexorable. When Norman Tebbit had ventured to suggest that BBC reportage on the US attack against Libya was slanted against the Americans, there was great and furious protesting; and their reporter Kate Adie was immediately given an award for her Libyan broadcasts. The BBC issued a detailed rebuttal of Tebbit's charges, arguing that everything in the reportage was true, except for one mistake which everybody else had made, connecting the attack with a terrorist attempt at Heathrow. Tebbit submitted the BBC's detailed apologia to an independent barrister, and the Queen's Counsel read it with a cold eye:

> ". . . overall the response fails. It is itself cheap and glib in many places. More important, it fails to meet the substantial charge: that the ordering of themes, stories, paragraphs and sentences, and the colouring of the language, can and did turn even a broadcast which makes no untrue statements into a slanted, confrontational and fundamentally political or "editorialising" *prise de position* or taking a line."

The BBC's riposte arrived a little late, billed as a retrospective television report on the Libyan attack. In fact it was a prosecutory TV brief which did not try to hide its anti-Americanism. Tom Bower, the BBC presenter, used quantities of hearsay and speculation (mingled, naturally, with the occasional hard fact), and later described this mélange as "63

[1] An intra-office editorial memo in my possession, from Boston's *Atlantic Monthly*, says: "We aspire to a 'God-like' . . . stance."

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minutes of tight evidence". He established that the Syrians had been involved in the Berlin disco bombing which provoked the attack. His insinuation was that this proved Libyan innocence. (Cut to grisly shots of dead Libyan babies.) It also "proved" that the Americans, itching to get Gaddafi on any terms, had seized on the disco bombing as a pretext. Intelligence intercepts seemed to incriminate Gaddafi, but Bower had ways of dealing with those; using repeated shots of chattering telex machines typing out the messages in *English*, he implied (without actually saying it) that the intercepts had been faked to justify the raid. Other visual manipulation was slick, if a bit obvious. European and other critics of the raid, placed in settings and lighting which made them appear magisterial and authoritative, were given prompting questions to suit Bower's line. Americans defending the attack were lit and filmed at angles which made them look shifty, sinister, and either lightweight or overbearing, with provocative and prosecutory questioning. Tight evidence indeed.

LOOKING ON THE bright side of all this, I suspect that such hanky-panky may at least be beginning to kill off the myth of the disembodied media seraph. Bias is the norm, and prejudiced reporting can be seen more easily for what it is; viewers can take on the Babbittry of the journalist[2] with an ever-ready handful of salt. More than one research poll has indicated that a long-standing wariness among newspaper readers has now spread to TV viewers and radio listeners. Given so much bent reporting on contentious or highly emotional issues (e.g. Apartheid, Nuclear weapons and energy, "Rambo" America), can such scepticism be bad for democracy? A well-informed public may well begin with the selective will to disbelieve.

However, news and current affairs are not the only means of access to the "hearts and minds" of a gullible audience. Television drama, especially on the BBC, has for some years been used to agitate for social causes (cf. *Cathy Come Home*) and to project political views, almost invariably those of the Left.[3] The Annan Report mentioned this tendency, and noted the explanation given by the then Director-General of the BBC, Sir Charles Curran:

> ". . . that the balance in this field was exceedingly difficult as so few right-wing plays were written. The problem was not one of what was acceptable but of what was available."

Early this year a media scandal cast doubt on this explanation as it applies to BBC TV drama today; and it raised the possibility that political shading of the BBC's output of original plays is not accidental at all, but deliberately managed. The public were given revealing glimpses of another kind of disembodied seraph: the back-room administrator at the BBC who determines what we see and—more important—what we do not see; and whose negative decisions are normally obscured by a cocoon of bureaucratic fog.

VERY FEW OF the best television playwrights in Britain openly depart in their work from the prevailing Left-wing or anti-Thatcher orthodoxy. One who does is Ian Curteis, a writer particularly noted for the quality of his television films based on recent history. His play *Sir Alexander Fleming* was the BBC entry at the 1973 Prague Festival; and ITV entered his *Philby, Burgess, and Maclean* in the 1978 Monte Carlo Festival. It was nominated by BAFTA as "best play of the year"; so were *Suez 1956* and *Churchill and the Generals* (which also received the Grand Prize for best programme of 1981 from the New York International Film and TV Festival).

BBC Heads of Plays have in the past treated Curteis with punctilious respect for the integrity of his scripts. *Suez 1956* was planned as a co-production, with US sponsorship—and during the preparation the American backers applied pressure for changes in the script which would make the character of Anthony Eden more unpleasant. Christopher Morahan, then Head of Plays, had rejected the proposal, saying that this was a play and not a dramatised documentary; the portrayal of Eden was the playwright's decision—no one else's. He stuck to this when the Americans threatened to withdraw their finance, and the BBC eventually produced the play without the cash (and the Left-liberal bias) of the American backers.

When Alasdair Milne, Director-General of the BBC, personally commissioned a play on the Falklands War from Curteis, was there any reason to suspect that anything had changed? (Respect for integrity, the rights of the author, and all that.) In April this year, the play was published, and Curteis's introduction explained in graphic and rather damning detail how his good faith has been misplaced, and the integrity of his script had been not only challenged but crudely violated by the BBC.[4]

It was only a few months after the Falklands War (rather soon for such a project) that Curteis accepted Milne's commission, subject to certain safeguards. In particular, the credits were to stipulate that this was a *play* and not a dramatised documentary. After the contract was signed (in April 1983), preliminary research among Government and Ministry officials who had been involved in the war ran "full tilt into a thunder-storm"—fury over the BBC's conduct during the war was still raging. Curteis decided to put aside the project until the atmosphere had calmed. By 1985 he was ready to begin again.

> "Nothing had prepared me for the sheer galvanizing absorption of the subject. I couldn't wait to get to my desk

[2] Tom Wolfe's phrase, "Babbittry of the intellectuals", was used to characterise the "Amerika" views of the '60s and '70s Radical Chic. See his introduction to *Nine Lies About America* by Arnold Beichman (1972).

[3] BBC drama's favoured writers include the far-Left Alan Bleasdale and the Trotsykist Jim Allen. Allen is the author of *Perdition* (1987), a piece of scandalous agitprop which, using tabloid techniques of selective quotation, illogical juxtaposition, and half-truth, attempted to show that Israel was founded by Zionists who collaborated actively with Nazis and shared their ideology. The Royal Court Theatre cancelled its production of the play but the director, Max Stafford-Clark, still insists that Zionist-Nazi collusion is "undisputed".

[4] *The Falklands Play*. By IAN CURTEIS. Hutchinson, £3.95. Some of the following quotations are from Curteis's introduction, the others from my own inquiries.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

each morning. Just as the crisis itself touched a central nerve in the national psyche in 1982, so it electrified me. This was not shallow jingoism, but the dramatic rising to the surface once more of values and issues that we on these islands have cared most profoundly about down the centuries, and on which our civilized freedom rests. . . ."

After detailed research and four drafts, the play was delivered in April 1986. The BBC wrote to Curteis, officially accepting the script, subject to comments from the producer. The budget was settled, and a rehearsal schedule confirmed, with studios booked for the appropriate dates. At Curteis's request, one of the BBC's best producers, Cedric Messina, was assigned to the play. Still wary of the political controversy which hung over the war, Curteis approached Alasdair Milne about the possible problems of transmitting the play in what might be an "election year". Milne told him: no problem. Transmission was fixed for 2 April 1987, the fifth anniversary of the Argentine invasion.

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S assurance was, in the Nixonian sense, "rendered inoperative" by Peter Goodchild, the BBC's latest Head of Plays, who had come to the job from the BBC's Science Features Department, innocent of background in playwrighting, theatre, and play-production in television. This had brought him into conflict with Curteis on several occasions but, determined to head off trouble over *The Falklands Play*, Curteis made a particular effort to establish cordial relations. Goodchild's response was an attempt to remove Cedric Messina from the production. Curteis objected; Messina stayed.

Goodchild then began to interfere with the script. He objected to the portrayal of Mrs Thatcher, most of all to the scenes in which she quietly wept over the loss of the *Sheffield* and wrote in her own hand to relatives of the dead servicemen. He also disliked passages which showed the war as being fought to resist aggression, and pressed Curteis to insert more material showing opposition to the war in Britain. (Almost the whole country, except the far Left, had firmly supported the war.) He pressed for an amazing alteration in the War Cabinet scenes: some operational decisions were to be shown as shaped by "the coming election". Curteis was taken aback, and asked for evidence of this. Goodchild produced none; simply insisting that the changes be made "before we can go ahead with production".[5]

But the play already had a transmission date, and studios were booked for rehearsals. Puzzled by Goodchild's remarks, Curteis suspected the involvement of the BBC Managing Director, Bill Cotton. When he tried to make contact, Cotton proved elusive. Goodchild, behind Curteis's back, had meanwhile approached Cedric Messina with the proposed changes; he got a dusty reply. On the War Cabinet scenes Curteis consulted Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin,[6] whose answer was unequivocal:

"No such [i.e. electoral] considerations ever played a part in the conduct of the war, when so many men's lives were at stake. At that stage the election had not been mooted, and could have been up to two years ahead. . . ."

Again Curteis requested Goodchild's evidence. In vain. He tried once more to reach Cotton, with no better luck. He spoke to the BBC-1 Controller, Michael Grade, who asked about the "relationship" between the sinking of the *Belgrano* and the "Peruvian Peace Initiative". The principal figure to adduce a sinister "relationship" had been the obsessed Labour MP Tam Dalyell, whose theory was that Mrs Thatcher had ordered the sinking to sabotage the peace initiative and that she was guilty of mass murder. An all-party Parliamentary Committee had established that this was sheer fantasy; but Curteis now wondered whether he was being pressed by the BBC to underwrite Dalyell's discredited charges. He suggested that transmission be postponed until after the election—instead production was stopped. Curteis notes the sequel:

"Two weeks later, on August 3 [1986], BBC-1 transmitted at peak viewing time a play . . . that . . . depicted the British during the Falklands crisis as drunken, nostalgic, flag-waving, blood-thirsty warmongers."

Subsequently the BBC advertised another production as a "true-to-life" story of the 1917 Etaples Mutiny in the British Army. The programme's historical adviser was not so enthusiastic. The play, he said, was "riddled with errors" and "a tissue of lies".[7] What the playwright Alan Bleasdale had done was to cook history to a recipe for Left-wing agitprop; and Goodchild for the BBC had accepted the concoction. Curteis's refusal to season his own script with historical falsifications had ended with some BBC official—Goodchild, or was it Cotton?—closing down the production.

OF COURSE, this lamentable affair was bound to become public. Early this year, after spectacular press coverage, Curteis and Bill Cotton exchanged furious letters in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Cotton's response to the detailed indictment was long on huff-and-puff. It was, he said:

"ridiculous to state that Mr Goodchild's conversations were politically rather than artistically motivated. . . . In the case of *The Falklands Play* it was referred to Director of Programmes, Michael Grade, and myself, to read in July 1986. . . . We separately concluded that the script was, as a drama, not yet good enough. . . ."

He denied that Curteis's play had been "postponed" for any other reason, but above the letter a *Sunday Telegraph* profile alluded to the opinion of a "senior colleague" that Cotton

[5] Peter Goodchild, official BBC letter to Ian Curteis, 7 July 1986.

[6] Lord Lewin was present at all meetings of the War Cabinet, and in constant touch with the Prime Minister throughout the crisis.

[7] The latter quote is a *Daily Mail* summary of the Adviser's remarks, made during an interview. He complained to the Press Council that he had not used these words; but the complaint was rejected, on the grounds that they were a fair summary of what he had said.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"was damned if he was going to allow Mrs Thatcher to get credit for the Falklands all over again".[8]

I rang the BBC to confirm this. Bill Cotton would not speak to me. I was referred to Keith Samuel, the BBC's Chief Press Officer, who threatened me with the courts if I did not handle this "very, very carefully". Speaking darkly of "enemies of the BBC", he adopted a lugubrious tone and said: "I-have-marked-your-card!" Later, when I intimated that I might publish this threat, he said he would deny it.

Peter Goodchild made his own colourful contribution to the public discussion. After listeners wrote to the BBC Radio programme *Feedback* about the scandal, Goodchild was summoned to answer their complaints on the air. The *Feedback* presenter, Chris Dunkley, did not have a copy of Goodchild's letter of 7 July 1986, which demanded script changes; but he raised the subject on the programme.

> GOODCHILD: No, no, I simply questioned his sources, I didn't actually ask for changes. . . .

In due course Dunkley arrived at another subject on which his listeners had been expressing concern.

> DUNKLEY: . . . *Feedback* writers clearly often feel that there are lots of left-wing plays from the BBC both radio and television, and no right-wing plays.
>
> GOODCHILD: Well, you see, I think that what they're describing as left-wing is in a sense the essence probably of journalism and also of drama which is something which questions the status quo . . . and when you in fact confront a play which is uncomfortable and does start questioning social values, then I think people tend to equate that with something which is left-wing, and quite often those questions can be the same kinds of questions that you would actually find being raised by people who are described as being on the political right in this country.[9]

The identification of drama with an "essence" that questions the status quo reflected Goodchild's limited background in the field. Was he unaware of how many of William Shakespeare's plays actually *celebrate* the status quo? Dunkley offered a number of examples of Left-wing playwrights favoured by BBC drama. Goodchild, replying with a claim that Right-wingers were also used, didn't name any names. This reticence may have been connected with his assertion that Left-wing is really Right-wing. It seemed an odd way to reassure worried listeners.

The affair limped to a ghastly pause in April with a disingenuous letter to Ian Curteis from the new BBC Chairman, Duke Hussey (it was released to the press before Curteis received it). If someone else wished to produce the play, said Hussey, "We have no objection". He invited interested parties to approach the Director-General. But under the terms of Curteis's contract such an approach would have been pointless, since the BBC could not sub-let the rights. Before anyone else could produce *The Falklands Play* it had to be released outright to Curteis; and Hussey's letter didn't offer to do this. The BBC was left in the convenient if dog-in-the-manger position of blocking a production by anyone else, while pretending not to do so. In mid-September it finally relented, and released the rights to Curteis.

But a general closing of ranks appears to extend beyond the BBC. After the rights were released, Patrick Drumgoole, Managing Director of HTV (an independent television company which covers Wales and the West of England), showed a strong initial interest in producing *The Falklands Play*. A director and producer were provisionally assigned to the project. Then, following a board meeting, Drumgoole told the director of a peculiar decision: HTV would not produce the play after all, for fear of "being seen to be lackeys to the Thatcher Government".

THE WORST ASPECT of this wretched business is the damage it has done to an already tattered BBC reputation. Where "Auntie Beeb" was once seen as a kind of majestic Minerva, she is now accused by some of being a raddled political whore. That accusation is ludicrous. The BBC is a vast organisation. According to Michael Leapman's *The Last Days of the Beeb* (1986), it is the biggest broadcasting conglomerate in the world—too big—and it ought to be broken down into more viable units. But if the BBC is indeed a mansion with many wings, some of these have been seen now and again to display red lights behind the prim lace curtains.

I NOTE SIGNS OF a reorganisation of BBC News and Current Affairs under the new Deputy Director-General, John Birt; but what these changes will mean in political terms is still uncertain. In January, after a TV programme about supposed dirty tricks against British governments by MI5 was stopped, *Newsnight* staff moaned about "unjustified censorship" by the Assistant Director-General, Alan Protheroe. "A source close to" Michael Checkland, the Director-General, remarked acidly (*The Sunday Times*, 5 April 1987): "The children at Lime Grove don't understand that they actually have to have proof before they run some stories. . . ." But in June Protheroe was to leave the BBC, and it was reported that the MI5 story (based on the notorious *Spycatcher* by Peter Wright) would after all be "investigated" by *Panorama*. In July John Birt moved the Head of BBC Radio's news and current affairs, John Wilson, into the post of controlling editorial policy, charged with seeing that "the corporation avoids embarrassing débâcles such as *Real Lives* and the Zircon spy satellite series" (*The Sunday Times*, 19 July 1987). In the past Wilson has confirmed to me that

---

[8] Cotton issued a writ against the *Sunday Telegraph*. He was upset about the notion that the "postponement" might have political motives. Other observers mooted the possibility that personal loathing of Mrs Thatcher might have played a part—but this is just hearsay. The *Sunday Telegraph* Deputy Editor, Ian Watson, noted that the BBC had been more hostile to public figures than the profile was to Cotton. "Cotton can dish it out", he said, "but he can't take it." The newspaper regards the writ as a clumsy muzzling attempt which will not succeed, and will defend it if it ever does come to court. . . .

[9] From the official BBC transcription of *Feedback*, 6 March 1987. Whether the Queeg-like rhythms are an accident of transcription or Goodchild's own style, I cannot say; they are of a piece with the rest of his contribution.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there was a "small-l liberal bias" in the reporting of news by the BBC. Will he now move toward a more neutral (or objective, or balanced) stance? Or, after all the BBC's reshufflings, will it be a case of *plus ça change*?

Meanwhile, in the Plays Department, it is business as usual. The detailed refutation of Ian Curteis's charges, promised by Peter Goodchild on *Feedback* (and to me by the BBC's Chief Press Officer), has yet to appear. The far-Left playwright Trevor Griffiths has been commissioned to write a drama series on the Miners' Strike, with the militant action set in a Welsh mining community; and Griffiths admits openly (*The Times*, 8 June 1987) that the series is "a political piece". Another series, on pornography—and politics—will come from Dennis Potter, an active supporter of the Labour Party. Most interesting of all, a play by Charles Wood—*Tumbledown*—is now well into production; according to *The Observer* (28 June 1987), it is "the true and tragic story of a Guards officer, Robert Lawrence, who was badly injured (in the Falklands War)". The tenor of *Tumbledown* can be gauged from Wood's comment on the war, quoted by Lord Chalfont in the House of Lords (*Hansard*, 21 July 1987):

> "The Falklands War should never have happened; the fact that it did happen is a reason for shame, regret, and anger."

For all the abominable treatment he has suffered, Curteis says he senses a "sea change" at the BBC. Does this mean calmer waters? Or more storms?

AUTHORS

George Urban, until recently Director of Radio Free Europe, graduated from the University of Budapest in 1947 and in 1956 obtained his Ph.D. at the University of London. He served with the BBC from 1958-60 and then as director of university broadcasting and academic consultant for RFE, on whose behalf this conversation was recorded. Among numerous other publications, he has edited *Détente* (1976), *Hazards of Learning* (1977), *Eurocommunism* (1978), *Communist Reformation* (1979), and *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World* (1982), all published by Maurice Temple Smith. Many of the extended conversations which appear in his books had their first publication in ENCOUNTER.

Matthew Francis read English at Cambridge and was a postgraduate student of American literature at the University of Sussex. He now works as a technical author, writing manuals for computer systems as well as stories and plays. His poems have won prizes in the National and Southampton Poetry Competitions. He is co-author of a dramatic adaptation of Stella Gibbons's *Cold Comfort Farm* which was performed at the Blewbury Open Air Festival in July 1986, and is working on a novel.

Ritchie Robertson is Fellow and Director of Studies in Modern Languages at Downing College, Cambridge. He is the author of *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1985), and is currently working on a wider study of German-Jewish writing.

Vernon Scannell's latest volume of autobiography, *Argument of Kings*, has just been published by Robson Books who earlier this year brought out his most recent collection of poetry, *Funeral Games*.

O. L. Smaryl is an engineer by profession. He left Czechoslovakia in 1968; since then he has been a freelance journalist and has lectured at various American universities.

Jean-François Revel writes a column for *Le Point* in Paris. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, was published in 1985 by Weidenfeld (London) and Doubleday (New York).

Lynn Pan (who also writes as Pan Ling) was born and brought up in Shanghai, and subsequently studied at the Universities of London and Cambridge. She teaches Chinese and travels frequently to China. Her most recent books are *China's Sorrow: Journeys Around the Yellow River* (Century Publishing, 1985), and *The New Chinese Revolution*, published earlier this year by Hamish Hamilton.

Vernon Bogdanor, Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, is the author of many books, including *Changing British and American Party Systems* (Praeger, 1984) and *What is Proportional Representation?* (Martin Robertson, 1984), and editor of *Representatives of the People?* (Gower Press, 1986) and *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Institutions*, published this autumn. He is now writing a book on modern democratic government, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

Richard Mayne, co-editor of ENCOUNTER, is the author, among other works, of *The Recovery of Europe* (Weidenfeld and Harper & Row, 1970), and *Postwar* (Thames and Hudson, 1983), and editor of *Western Europe: A Handbook* (Muller, Blond & Briggs, 1986). He is currently working on a study called *The Pioneers: A History of Federal Union*.

Barbara Beck, an expert on German economic and political affairs, and a former European Editor of *The Economist*, is Secretary-General of the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society.

Edward Pearce is a columnist for *The Sunday Times*, and author of two volumes of sketches of Parliamentary personalities, *The Senate of Lilliput* and *Hummingbirds and Hyenas* (Faber, 1983, 1985). His latest book, *Looking Down on Mrs Thatcher*—published this autumn by Hamish Hamilton—includes several of his ENCOUNTER articles.

George Watson's previous articles in ENCOUNTER include "The War Against the Whigs" (January 1985), "Was Hitler a Marxist?" (December 1984), "Who Are the Conservatives?" (December 1983), and "Can England Love a Coalition?" (October 1981).

Herb Greer is an American playwright and author who has lived in Europe since the early 1950s. His previous contributions to ENCOUNTER include "Terrorism & the Media", "The News Managers", Who Censors What, Where & When", and "The Ethics of Fallible Journalism" (August 1982; June, July-August, and December 1986).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

"Glasnost"

YOUR MAY ISSUE, with its cover on which is emblazoned in large cyrillic letters the Russian word *glasnost*, immediately attracted my attention. The article by Besançon-Urban is, in my opinion, the best of its kind and points to the long-time debasement of language that has been practised by dictatorships in general, but especially in the Soviet Union.

There is one perhaps minor but revealing point about the word *glasnost* that I continue to find intriguing. When the word first began to be bandied about, almost always in the sense of liberal and tolerant "openness", almost nowhere hinting at a propagandistic intent, I turned, out of a simple sense of curiosity, to my Russian-English Dictionary (Smirnitsky, Moscow, 1959) that has served my purposes for almost 30 years now. On page 153, *glasnost* is given and is provided with only one Muscovite translation: "*publicity*".

I continue to find this of some interest whenever I see and hear the name for this new Soviet doctrine. It might be well for others to bear this in mind as well.

HERBERT H. PAPER
Hebrew Union College
Cincinnati, Ohio

Little Lies, Big Lie

THE MAY ENCOUNTER relating to Soviet "Openness" (*glasnost*), furnishes insights worthy of consideration. A riposte may, however, not be amiss.

While the underpinning of Soviet ideology is falsification in both language and deed, in substantial part, none the less the system is less total lie than it is operational myth. This perception does not diminish a recognition of the malevolent consequences of the social system. Such a distinction, in response to the conversation between Alain Besançon and George Urban in "Language & Power in Soviet Society", is tendered as no mere cavil.

Immanent within a lie is dishonest intent and unreliable professing. The Soviet social system is autocratic. Ideology masks substantial power and privilege. But Soviet socialism—that is, government control and collectively fostered solutions to social organisation—is not devoid of some good faith, however misapplied.

Soviet political legitimacy may also be placed properly in issue. This does not strip ideology, even in the Soviet Union, from aspiration. Indeed, it is one matter to intimate correctly that the system is heavily infused with lies—it is quite another thing to suggest that Soviet Society is one big lie.

There are some honest but inoperable Soviet intentions. Gorbachov recognises this actuality. In our zeal in the West to be cautious and self-protective, we should nevertheless yield to *this* understanding.

ELLIOTT A. COHEN
New York

Defending Freedom

ALAN RYAN'S review of *Today's American: How Free?* ("Left Rethinking", ENCOUNTER, September-October 1987) strangely suggests that our thirteen essayists "settled" for "modest reformism".

Max M. Kampelman—on leave as board chairman of Freedom House while he served as chief US arms-control negotiator with the USSR at Geneva—provided in the book's lead essay a more sophisticated "game plan" (Zbigniew Brzezinski's term) for freedom activists than "modest reformism". Kampelman noted that "there are both ideologues and anti-democratic forces in our society today—and whether on the extreme Left or the extreme Right, they would "impose their values on the majority of their fellow-citizens". He added:

> "It does not diminish [these] domestic problems, or the necessity to address them, to say that it is the anti-democratic forces abroad that most threaten our society and its values. The most obvious manifestation of this threat is, of course, the Soviet Union. The combination of its great military strength, its totalitarian ideology and policies, its expansionist history, its proclaimed intentions—all of these pose a threat of formidable dimensions. That threat is sometimes obscured or camouflaged by the Soviet's rhetorical devotion to peace, to democracy, to progressive change. But intermittently the reality breaks through and we see naked the aggressive power that has even recently extended itself into Poland, Afghanistan, Latin America, Africa—in fact, in every continent except North America. The Soviet threat, it is clear, is directed not only at the United States. It is directed at other free countries, and at many countries whose people aspire to greater independence and freedom. The United States is not free to disregard or minimize that threat. If we value freedom itself, we are free only to challenge and counter it. . . ."

Nevertheless, as Ambassador Kampelman writes, "the bridge of dialogue and negotiations must be maintained, as it has been, for example, in cultural affairs, in economic matters, in arms negotiations, and in the Helsinki process". This will require not only reformism, "modest" or otherwise, but all the resources a strong democracy can muster.

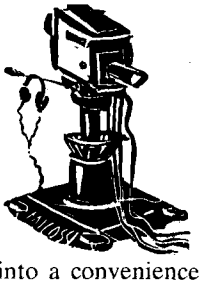
Americans may, indeed, respond to Ryan's summation of the book as he suspects they would: charging that he reflects "the European unwillingness to take responsibility for world peace".

Our view, Ryan suggests, is "old-fashioned". Yet even in these days of *glasnost* the Gorbachov "revolution" has produced not institutional change, but only a work-plan to improve Soviet management skills—and a more sophisticated launch-pad for ideological competition.

LEONARD R. SUSSMAN
Executive Director
Freedom House
New York City

Myths, Movies, Hooligans

In Defence of "Rambo"—By DON SHARP



JEFFREY Richards ("Yobbery With Violence", February 1987) rightfully condemns the young hooligans he encountered on the train to Carlisle. But in pursuing the causality of their swinishness, he falls into a convenience worthy of any jobbed Third World dictator, Soviet *apparatchik*, or guilt-ridden Western intellectual: namely, the Americans caused it all, especially with their horrible movies.

Richards correctly observes that the "social sanctions imposed by the old working-class communities have broken down". However, he fails to pursue causalities related to the fact that, in the old days, the train conductor would have stopped that Carlisle train and ejected the young hoodlums, and would have done so with the full approval and assistance of the law.

I don't know how things stand in England today, but in the United States no conductor would dare such a thing for fear that the young hoodlums, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union and the more "influential" newspapers, would sue him for embarrassing

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them in public or otherwise abridging their constitutional rights.

Whatever the finer points of this syndrome in its British form, American movies have nothing to do with it, and certainly nothing that would justify the misconstructions Richards assembles in his eagerness to condemn the likes of Sylvester Stallone. In fact, Richards's analyses of American movies constitute a textbook case of how to get things wrong by deliberately trying. Agreed, "cinema-goers are on the whole teenagers"; accordingly, before assigning massive social causality to movies such as *Conan*, the *Rocky* quartet, and the *Rambo* pair, Richards should consider the socio-psychological consequences of movies that do not feature scenes of violence.

FOR EXAMPLE, the trite affair *Pretty in Pink* is still going strong after *Conan* and *Rambo* have become last season's cliché. *Pretty in Pink* has its deficiencies as high art, but its dominant theme asserts the moral and ethical superiority of decency over nastiness, and teenagers over here generally regard it as a more credible view of reality than *Conan* or *Rambo*.

Likewise, *Back to the Future*, a dreadfully sappy movie but one that likewise asserts humane values, has also outlasted *Conan* and *Rambo*. As a more current example, *Blue Velvet* contains considerable arbitrary and perverse violence, but ends on a note of sentimentalised, apple-pie American culture, and audiences have been flocking to it for months.

Why, Richards might have told us, are the "yobs" who are so influenced by *Conan/Rocky/Rambo* not equally influenced by these others? Obviously, because their choice in movies reflects a disposition they have already adopted, rather than a disposition engendered by movies—assuming thuggish "yobs" go to movies at all, this latter being an arguable proposition.

Richards selected his movies carefully to suport his thesis, and having committed the intellectual barbarism of selective evidence, followed it with the graver one of wilful misinterpretation. I can only conclude that he never saw either *Conan* or *Rambo I/II*, but got his opinions solely from the reviewers over here. Given that its star had a social connection with the Kennedy Clan, *Conan* got reasonably friendly treatment. No one claimed it was great art, but neither did anyone condemn it extremely.

By contrast, *Rambo* provoked our critics into frothing apoplexies. They simply could not contain their distaste for it. More to the immediate point, American audiences confounded the critics by vastly preferring *Rambo* to *Conan*, and they did so because *Rambo I & II* assert the very "community values" that Richards claims to admire.

Sylvester Stallone has made himself into a modern institution, not because he says something new every time but because he says the same old thing in dramatic terms. His messages are variations of a single theme: first, that a man can be strong and good despite the evils of earthly existence—indeed, is obliged to be so—and, second, that strong men arise to correct the evils that afflict the weak. We have heard this before, of course: early in *Beowulf*, and later in King Arthur and Robin Hood.

If old community values have broken down in the face of unemployment, etc.—just insert Richards's list of modern damnations here—Stallone's *Rocky* demonstrates that social evils are no excuse for the mindless abuse of others that Richards saw on the Carlisle train. Rather, in the face of his hopelessness, the hero in *Rocky* seeks to develop the one skill he can claim. Agreed, that skill does rather involve beating someone similarly disposed about the head and shoulders, but only according to the rigid protocols of the boxing ring, where rules and referees assure an even match. The brutalising in *Rocky* in no way resembles drunken obscenities shouted in a commuter car.

RICHARDS GOES even farther astray when he attempts to interpret the *Rambo* pair. He should have taken more inspiration from his own quotation from *Tom Brown*: the Christian muscleman uses his body for the "protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes".

In *Rambo I*, Rambo goes to pay his respects to an old Army buddy. The "dramatic basis for conflict", as the how-to-write books say—conflict, *pace* Richards, being a continuing theme in the dramatic arts—arises between the man of principle and a Hitlerite, small-town lawman whose vanity has been inflated by a badge and a pistol.

The lawman is a stereotype, of course, the familiar form of arbitrary, inhumane authority that so often imposes evil on innocent good will. By wit and strength, Rambo outlasts his adversary and is vouchsafed an opportunity to kill him. However, at the behest of his quondam commander from Viet Nam, he forgoes the opportunity and wilfully submits to the law, knowing full well that by doing so he will wind up in a military stockade. In other words, the strong man of principle accepts the burdens of his moral choices. He submits out of a sense of duty to a sort of higher law that obtained among his Viet Nam buddies, a higher law that holds that good men maintain their dignity even when abused by evilly executed authority.

Rambo II opens with our hero in the stockade. Upon being invited to conduct a behind-the-lines mission to rescue American prisoners held in Viet Nam, he asks, "Do we get to win this time?" His question shows that he recognises "spiritual wickedness in high places", and that he maintains his fidelity to the code of good men who resist such things. The movie does have the incredible exaggerations of an epic, but one of the most gratifying things about the American response to *Rambo II* has been that audiences understood the question and sympathised with it.

The mission involves the locating of several American prisoners and, despite the perfidy of officialdom, their rescue. Along the way, an heroic Vietnamese girl gets killed by bullets intended for Rambo, and he saves her gold neckchain in a somewhat elementary gesture of sentiment. Such a gesture would never occur in a *New Yorker* short story, but it none the less demonstrates that the man of violence can also be a man of compassion, and thus inculcates the values of "the Christian muscleman", not "the yobs" Richards met on the train. A pity, in fact, that Richards's yobs do not more closely emulate Rambo.

As an *ad hoc* reviewer, Richards should remember that drama depends on the motivations of characters. Accordingly, we might wonder what motivates Richards to so roundly, if amateurishly, blame the Americans for English hooliganism. One might even ask why he didn't raise the voice of civilisation in that railway car, didn't protest against that offensive, American-inspired barbarism rather than prudently remove his lapel badge and hide behind his note-taking.

WELL, OF COURSE, HE COULDN'T do anything with that lot. Why, he was just one man and they were a whole gang, and if he had raised a peep, he might have gotten hurt.

Not at all like Rambo, you see, who would have laid the whole yobbish crew to waste; not at all like the Rambo who demonstrates the physical strength and moral courage that is so conspicuously lacking among intellectuals in free countries, a lack the intellectuals clearly recognise and loathe themselves for. In their loathing, they seek to recover some basis for self-respect by condemning the likes of Rambo. Hence the paroxysms among the critics over here.

By contrast, intellects less corrupted by the academy and less burdened by guilt over their own hypocrisy can enjoy *Rambo* and *Mad Max* openly—for such

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people do not, as Richards and other intellectuals do, confuse images on a movie screen with reality. Since they are free of that confusion, they can see the mythic reality beneath, can see the endorsement of civilised values when hooligans are overwhelmed by one strong man.

DON SHARP

Gardena
California

Reply

DON SHARP's absurd claim that in my article "Yobbery With Violence" I blamed English hooliganism wholly on American films is a travesty of my argument.

First of all, I devoted the early part of the article to a discussion of James Walvin's book *Football and the Decline of Britain*; I entirely endorsed his analysis of the broad complex of social and economic changes in Britain since the 1960s which has created the current state of affairs. I went on to add another strand to the argument—the cultural validation of thuggery for British youth and the provision of uncivilised and unacceptable role-models in a cluster of American films. There was never any suggestion that these films turned otherwise law-abiding youngsters into hooligans. The argument was always that they provided social sanction for anti-social behaviour.

"I don't know how things stand in England today", says Mr Sharp, which immediately disqualifies him from further comment. His argument is based almost entirely on his perception of how these films were received in the United States. My article was about how they were received by a section of the British cinema-going public. I would not presume to pronounce on how they were received in America. It is, however, a commonplace that American films can often mean something quite different to non-American audiences than they do at home. For one thing, they are being viewed in a quite different social and cultural context. (On this, see for instance, Paul Swann, *The Hollywood Feature Film in Postwar Britain*, Croom Helm, 1987.) It is universally acknowledged that American films have provided role-models for British youth since the 1920s. The films I chose to discuss are those which have become cult favourites in cinemas and on video in Britain.

THE FILMS which Mr Sharp cites as providing an alternative world-view will simply not do in a British context. *Pretty in Pink* made no impact at the British box-office. *Blue Velvet* has as I write this not yet been released in Britain. The films of Michael J. Fox, such as *Back to the Future*, have their greatest following (so I am led to believe) among teen-age girls.

The idea that I have not seen the films I write about is simply insulting. Of course I have seen them, and what is more, seen them with a British cinema-audience. I did not discuss the first Rambo film, *First Blood*, because I had not seen it. But it had nothing like the impact in Britain that *Rambo* itself had, an impact I charted from the pages of *The Sun* newspaper. "Do we get to win this time?", the Rambo comment that apparently has such emotional resonance for US audiences, means nothing at all to British teenagers, for whom the Viet Nam War is as remote and irrelevant as the Wars of the Roses. I repeat that the only thing which British teen-age audiences get out of Stallone films is an endorsement of murderous *macho* violence and the glorification of a "killing machine".

THE CINEMA has recently given us a far more acceptable role-model for British youngsters, and that is in the British film *My Beautiful Laundrette*. In this film, Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis), a fascist cockney punk, renounces violence, refuses to hurt people, repents of his prejudices, and joins forces with an Asian to defy his former friends and create a successful business. Only at the end of the film, briefly and reluctantly, does Johnny return to violence—and then to come to the aid of an outnumbered man being beaten by his former friends. That is what I call responsible muscularity. *My Beautiful Laundrette* is a film of tenderness and humanity, and worth a thousand *Rambos*. It should be compulsory viewing for all would-be hooligans.

MR SHARP claims that people do not confuse movie images with reality. But he apparently does so himself, if he is seriously suggesting that I should have launched, Rambo-like, into the hooligans I encountered on the train. I don't know what the custom is in California these days, but it is not usual for British academics to travel around armed-to-the-teeth and naked-to-the-waist. I cannot see what useful purpose would have been served by my being knifed to death in a railway carriage, as has happened to others who have remonstrated with such groups, unless it was to prevent my writing the article, which has caused such palpable irritation.

If the special relationship between Britain and the United States is to survive, it must be based on candour and mutual respect. If my modest piece of constructive criticism of a section of the Hollywood film industry provokes such tirades and misrepresentation of arguments, it is small wonder that anti-Americanism, which I deeply deplore and continually combat, is on the increase.

JEFFREY RICHARDS

University of Lancaster

"Hoi Polloi"

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT should enact a law without delay prohibiting the use of the tautological stutter, "the *hoi polloi*". Dire literary punishments should be contemplated, not excluding banishment to some remote, but inhabited, Greek island.

One of the latest infringements in an excessively long line has occurred in the July-August 1987 issue of ENCOUNTER (Kenneth Minogue, "The Idea of Liberty & the Dream of Liberation", p.8, col. 1, l. 25). As shold be obvious to everyone, the Greek definite article *hoi* already means *the*. Consequently, the proper term this side of legality should be simply *hoi polloi*, the masses (pronounced *ee-polly*).

FRANCIS EBEJER

Swieqi Valley
Malta

Old Hat

THIS IS to thank you for sending me the June issue, although my subscription renewal arrived too late for the regular mailing. I especially wanted to see the second part of George Urban's interview with Alain Besançon, but when I saw an anniversary cover of *The New Yorker*, the picture of the immortal but stiff-necked Eustace Tilley, and a wonderful article on the late Harold Wallace Ross, scourge and idol of every *littérateur*, you got not only my gratitude but my enthusiasm.

I have often wondered why a person so uncouth as Ross could create and maintain a magazine so elegant, subtle and sophisticated (so "couth", we Americans joke) as *The New Yorker*. There are no similarities in temperament (or anything else) between them, except perhaps Ross's mania for excellence. Then I read Dan Pinck's article and I knew that Eustace Tilley, the visual symbol of the magazine's spirit, and Harold Wallace Ross had one identical quality: the hat.

S. M. SMITH

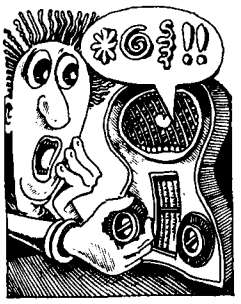
New York

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY

Thamesmouth Printing Group,
17-21 Hovefields Avenue, Basildon, Essex

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Life & Letters Today



New York City

SEVEN DIRTY WORDS: **New York's top-rated radio host delivered his usual blend of traffic reports and *double entendre* yesterday, despite sweeping measures by Government watchdogs aimed at curbing a tide of sexually explicit radio shows.**

"I'm thrilled—I never thought we did anything rude", said Mr Howard Stern, one of the main targets of the ruling on Thursday by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Mr Stern has developed a wide following with his drive-time morning shows, which mix news, weather, and traffic reports with almost non-stop banter on sexual and scatological subjects, much of it on the telephone with listeners.

The American Civil Liberties Union condemned the moves as "one more national nanny programme where the Federal Government has to control everybody because of the complaints of a few. . . ."

The measures, which include guidelines yet to be announced, are the first by the FCC since 1976, when it decreed that broadcasters could say almost anything except "seven dirty words" which it listed.

THE TIMES

Washington

COSMETICS: *A British production of "Animal Farm", George Orwell's satire of Stalinism, has been removed from the official Baltimore theater festival programme after a warning that Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland would withdraw their entries.*

The festival's producer said that the decision was

". . . a cosmetic accommodation, a means of keeping the festival intact."

WASHINGTON POST

London

BOREDOM: **Three bored teenagers used petrol bombs to set fire to a school after watching the Tottenham riots on television, Acton Crown Court was told yesterday.**

The teenagers tossed three petrol bombs through the window of Weldon Park School in Harrow three weeks after rioting on the Broadwater Farm Estate.

After his arrest Richard Higginson, 17, told police: "We got the idea from the riots. I watched them every night on telly. There's nothing else to do around South Harrow. It's boring round here unless you spend money. If you haven't got any money you've got to find something else to do."

With Damian Kiely, 16, and Darren Grimwood, 15, Higginson made three Molotov cocktails using milk bottles and clothing stolen from a washing-line.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

New York City

PERVERSIONS: *After three American servicemen had been killed while unloading and accidentally exploding a Pershing missile, an Army spokesman called the incident* **"an unplanned rapid ignition of solid fuel."**

A major manufacturer of greeting cards refers to them as **"social expression products."**

A supermarket offered its customers **"semiboneless ham"**, *probably a relative of the* **"limited lifetime guarantee"** *promised by a recent television commercial.*

These perversions of the language [Fred Hechinger writes] are brought to the attention of high-school English teachers by the "Quarterly Review of Doublespeak", a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Trying to make less seem more makes a supermarket chain say that they are open "24 hours a day", while suggesting that customers "check local stores for exact hours". Is the idea catching on? A bank in Detroit said its "24-hour banker machines" would be open almost eight hours a day.

When an Air Force missile flew out of control and crashed, the official version was that it merely "impacted with the ground prematurely".

A boys' camp, reports the latest "Doublespeak Quarterly", advertised that it was **"deliberately designed with individual attention for the minimally exceptional."**

NEW YORK TIMES

New York City

WEATHER REPORT: **On a New York subway one recent morning, an imposing woman, about to get off, turned and proclaimed, "*Repent, ye sinners! The world is coming to an end!*"**

Before stepping out, she added, "*Have a nice day.*"

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

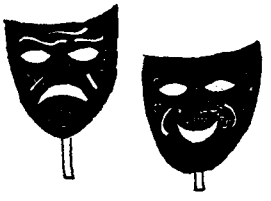
London

ALLAH FOR JESUS: *A disgruntled editor can be a dangerous thing and staff at the "Encyclopaedia Britannica" have just averted a catastrophe in the traditions of received knowledge by catching mistakes written into the computer files by an editor after he was told he was being fired. Among other changes, he substituted* ALLAH *for* JESUS CHRIST.

But all the errors were picked up by the computer security system and rectified before the 44-million-word 1987 edition went to press.

DAILY MAIL

London



CASH & TRASH: **Arts organisations suffered a brisk spanking from Arts Minister Richard Luce recently for not pursuing commercial sponsorship with enough enthusiasm. Now they have found a fatal flaw in the Government's new policy, and the implications of it bode ill for theatre. One theatre found, to its cost, that the listening bank was less interested in the commercial viability of the plays than the politics of their productions.**

The National Theatre currently have a sponsor who wants to give them around £50,000 before the end of the financial year, but with only five productions available he is proving hard to please.

They have paraded their wares *ad nauseam* but their new mistress wants brighter trinkets. The theatre's first production of Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was turned down as too controversial. The Goldoni trilogy *Country Mania* was considered ludicrously obscure. Peter Cox's new play *The Devil's Bottler* was, well, too new and much too risky, while the very title of John Ford's Jacobean classic *Tis Pity She's a Whore* sent the sponsor into a faint. This leaves the 19th-century melodrama *Silver King* which the gasping NT pray their sponsor might find rather jolly.

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The University of Chicago Press
congratulates
HANS JONAS
on receiving the 1987
Freedom Prize

Presented each year at the Frankfurt Book Fair
by the Börsenverein, the association of German booksellers
and publishers, this prize honors an individual, institution,
or organization, whose achievements in literature, science,
or art, have substantially contributed to the cause of peace.
Previous recipients have included Albert Schweitzer,
Hermann Hesse, the Club of Rome, and Karl Jaspers.

The University of Chicago Press
is privileged to have published these works by Hans Jonas:

THE IMPERATIVE OF RESPONSIBILITY
In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age

THE PHENOMENON OF LIFE
Toward a Philosophical Biology

PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS
From Ancient Creed to Technological Man

For information on these or any of the thousands of our other books in print, write to:
126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD, England, or to:
5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637, U.S.A.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED